

**Grounding Water Politics in Place: A comparative analysis of clean water access in Accra and Akosombo**

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# Abstract

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My paper will explore the consequences of water privatization in Ghana to understand how colonial and post-colonial events have aided in shaping water policy in Ghana. Through a post-colonial feminist and political ecology framework, I will analyze the effects of the water bottle and sachet industry alongside the overall process of water privatization including piped water and the advent of multinational water companies. This paper will incorporate intersectionality, health, politics, gender, socioeconomic status, and history. By comparing two places in Ghana, Accra and Akosombo, respectively urban and rural areas, I will analyze how fluctuating water policy has affected Ghanaians' health, attitudes, and access to water overtime. I will conclude by covering the resistance movements that emerged in retaliation to water privatization, which eventually culminated in the reinstatement of government control.

# Introduction

The scholarly discourse surrounding water privatization remains crucial yet controversial as it triggers a salient global debate regarding whether water serves as a commodity, a public good, a spiritual value or a human right. Advocates for water privatization state that water distribution becomes more efficient as private companies compete to offer customized access to water. Proponents of water as a public good call for the government to distribute water because it will ensure that all citizens gain access to water. Many grassroots organizations tend to consider water as a spiritual source, an extension of the human being that is sacred to that particular community. Other movements assert that water must serve as a basic human right; therefore, everyone should have access to water no matter the circumstances. Lastly, viewing water as a limited resource in some places and abundant in others acts as another driving factor that influences individuals' attitudes towards water and its distribution.

## **A new perspective:**

Concerning Africa, the debate of water privatization becomes slightly flawed as scholars tend to lump all African nations together or merely present a single case study of one African country with no other case studies of that country to compare it with. This tendency to disregard the unique governmental structure, attitudes, and history within African countries becomes clear in the apparent lack of country-specific research. The few scholarly articles that do close analysis of certain African countries erroneously ignore the water policy in these countries by primarily focusing on the effects of multinational companies and the IMF structural adjustment programs instead. Even though corporations and the IMF remain integral in explaining water privatization in African countries, the mere sparsity of meticulously analyzing the policies, laws and robust

history in African countries reinforces the racist narrative of these nations as incapable, helpless, and invisible. In the rare cases that enact close readings of African water policies, South African cases tend to dominate the narrative. Therefore, what lacks in these debates is an adequate amount of case studies regarding the historical influence concerning the policies of particular African countries with respect to water in relation to political, social, and economic context. For my analysis, I utilize a political ecology framework with a postcolonial feminist geography leaning to better understand how water is distributed and viewed today.

Political ecology involves the politicization of environmental issues by focusing on the impact of political and socioeconomic factors on the natural world. Postcolonial feminist thinkers broaden the conversation that typically focuses on Western thought to include the Global South by acknowledging how colonial atrocities and racism still plays a dominant role in the postcolonial experiences of the Global South. The Global South is a controversial term that still causes division within academia. Used as a substitute for the term third world or developing world, the Global South aims to identify newly industrialized nations or countries that are still in the process of development.

The main contribution of using the term, the Global South, is that the Global South typically includes countries that have suffered from long term colonialism and aims to account for that history in the present day. Critics of the usage of the Global South argue that the term can be misleading as it groups all countries in the Southern hemisphere as non-wealthy, which could harm wealthy counties in the Southern Hemisphere or poor countries in the Northern Hemisphere. Nonetheless, proponents of the Global South argue that the label is not a geographic term and in fact includes numerous low-income to middle-income countries in the Northern hemisphere as the term aims to account for the consequences of colonialism, neoliberalism, and

globalization. Therefore, postcolonial feminist thinkers tend to utilize the Global South and the Global North when differentiating between high-income countries with histories of hegemony and low to middle-income countries to mainly account for colonial histories and global inequalities. Additionally, I use a feminist framework to reveal how local experiences tie into global events. I argue a close analysis of the water policies and events in a certain African country as well as delving deeply into how it personally affects the community members in particular cities or towns will serve as a better avenue in exploring these debates and later determining an optimal form of water distribution.

### **Methodology:**

Ghana has experienced a long history of privatization and resistance in various forms from the very inception of this nation in 1957. Therefore, Ghana serves as a useful country of analysis as it has constantly dealt with the tug of war of privatizing and governmental control. Few studies have examined how access varies across place in Ghana while also considering factors of class, neighborhood (rural vs. urban), and gender. Moreover, many scholarly articles have failed to consider how water policy, practice and/or rights is framed in the political and public spheres. I address this gap by asking the following questions: How has history affected Ghana's current economic, political, and social position as well as its stance on water access? How does potable water policy and access vary between Accra, the bustling capital of Ghana and Akosombo, a small town near the Volta River ? What factors shape these differences (rural/urban, spiritual, histories of resistance, gender of narratives, politics)? What is the health impact on access to water?

In my paper, I will determine whether a correlation exists between Ghana's distribution of water in terms of efficiency, openness to corporations taking over, determining who gets

access to water and so forth with three historic events. These events include colonialism, the 1980s IMF sanctioned SAP's, and the National Coalition Against Water resistance movement. These events will weave into various points of my paper. Alongside these events I will compare and contrast colonial and post-colonial histories to examine the parallels or lack thereof of Ghana's current practices.

### **Time period:**

I intend to use the time period spanning from the 19th century to the present day in order to account for the colonial impacts in Ghana before its independence in 1957 and to account for how these influences affect how the nation operates today. I aim to incorporate the 1884 Berlin Conference that resulted in the partitioning of Africa to parallel the IMF's interaction with African countries. Another period of time I will highlight includes the 1950s. Specifically, I want to utilize this time period to connect my research with Kwame Nkrumah's outlook on development during the construction of the Volta Dam, also known as the Akosombo Dam, which lead to the displacement of thousands of Ghanaians and a massive malaria outbreak in the region. This ties to the events of privatizing Ghana's water starting in the 1980's, which lead to decreased access to water, especially among the poor who resorted to seeking out contaminated sources of water leading to massive outbreaks of water-borne illnesses and deaths.

### **Urban vs. Rural:**

I chose Accra (the urban capital of Ghana) and the rural, poorer Akosombo as the centers for my analysis because they offer a clear understanding regarding how privatization triggers drastically dissimilar effects on people of different classes and living conditions. Here, I will explore issues concerning Ghanaians' attitudes towards water privatization, the connection between clean water access to women and children's equity and health, and quantitative data on

who gets access to water. I have included the specific histories of these two places to illustrate how Accra and Akosombo may have similar or dissimilar responses to water privatization.

# Chapter 1: Water, Classism, and Health in Accra and Akosombo

*The poor man and the rich man do not play together - Ghanaian Proverb*

Determining the Ghanaian social class is complex as occupation does not always determine one's social class as factors such as status, housing, land ownership, access to toilet paper, etc. play enormous factors in determining one's social class<sup>1</sup>. In this paper, I determine social class primarily by access to clean, potable drinking water and I also pull from broad beliefs of who makes up a particular social class in Ghana. However, I must acknowledge that other researchers that I reference use different measurements and factors when determining social class leading to different groupings of particular classes. Due to this difference, one must take note that lower class may vary slightly when referencing to another author's work.

For this paper, the lower class includes primarily those from the labor force. For instance, hawkers who typically sell food and household items on the street fall into the lower-class category in Ghana. The middle class primarily includes school teachers, professors, blue collar workers, and farmers. The upper class consists of highly successful entrepreneurs and businessmen or the very few African elite who were able to acquire generational wealth. There is also a population of ex-pats and Ghanaians of European descent who fall into the lower, middle, and upper class depending on their occupation and social background.

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<sup>1</sup> Boadu, Kwame. "Association of Social Class with Malaria Prevalence among ..." Accessed April 12, 2020. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Frank\\_Trovato/publication/26498225\\_Association\\_of\\_Social\\_Class\\_with\\_Malaria\\_Prevalence\\_Among\\_Household\\_Heads\\_in\\_Ghana/links/54f722490cf2ccffe9da9bfb/Association-of-Social-Class-with-Malaria-Prevalence-Among-Household-Heads-in-Ghana.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Frank_Trovato/publication/26498225_Association_of_Social_Class_with_Malaria_Prevalence_Among_Household_Heads_in_Ghana/links/54f722490cf2ccffe9da9bfb/Association-of-Social-Class-with-Malaria-Prevalence-Among-Household-Heads-in-Ghana.pdf).



In Accra, many villagers, who tend to dominate the lower-class category, venture into the city during the day to work and then live in the outskirts of the city to avoid the high bills that accompany the city life. Many village children serve as a houseboy or a housegirl for middle and upper-class families where they receive free room and board in exchange for performing household chores. Typically, the houseboys and housegirls are also given an opportunity to pursue an education while they work. The middle and upper-class children normally go to public high schools and universities in Ghana. Ghanaians ranging from the lower to upper class under the context of education, economic opportunity, occupation, a lottery system, and in rare cases asylum gain the opportunity to immigrate to countries of the Global North such as the U.K., Germany, the Netherlands and the U.S. or move back and forth between Ghana and the Global North<sup>2</sup>. In cases of those who immigrate for economic opportunity, the children of the upper class typically stay in Ghana and start their own business as they have no economic incentive to move in search for a better life<sup>3</sup>. The well-being regarding the upper class and the middle class can drastically differ when accounting for status, access to wealth and opportunity among other things. However, when it comes to water, both the middle and upper class are fairly well-off in contrast with the lower class.

In Accra, the gap between the rich and poor is vast. The middle and upper class generally enjoy access to expensive bottled water stocked in their refrigerators and a piped water system. The lower class, on the other hand, must resort to drinking sachet water or fetching water from a water source that may be far away or nearby. Since sachet water can, at times, be of poor quality and be overpriced, the lower class fare far worse than the upper class with regard to water access.

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur, John A. *Class Formations and Inequality Structures in Contemporary African Migration: Evidence from Ghana*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

The sachet water system in Accra is a booming industry. Recently, amid an uproar over lack of government oversight regarding sachet water quality, the Ghanaian government set up the GSA to measure and standards for sachet water quality. In Accra, the GSA has been effective according to scientific studies conducted in Ghana. Nonetheless, due to the informal nature of the sachet water industry, fraudulent companies do exist as well as the tendency for sachet water companies to hike up prices. Typically, sachet water costs 250 cedis<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, the underserved who can only afford a few sachets per day due to their low income are forced to pay that amount “whereas the lower middle class buy [...] by the caseload” at a cheaper overall price.<sup>5</sup> Low-income individuals living in Accra “pay ten times more for their water than resident in high income areas.”<sup>6</sup> When it comes to the middle and upper-class attitudes towards water privatization, it is mostly ecstatic as the urbanites typically report satisfaction in their surveys in multiple research studies<sup>7</sup>.

Another aspect of the conversation includes women who have been largely excluded from the discussion and discourse of water privatization in Ghana. Sachet water provides a better alternative to fetching water as women who work as hawkers no longer have to stand in the hot sun with heavy buckets of water on their head as the plastic water sachets are much lighter to carry. Nonetheless, the poor quality of sachet water could prove harmful to women that will be discussed in further detail.

In Akosombo, once a rural village that has now transformed into a small town, water access is slightly different. Akosombo does have some wealth experienced by successful farmers

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<sup>4</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ainuson, Kwaku G. "Urban Water Politics and Water Security in Disadvantaged Urban Communities in Ghana." *African Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2010).

<sup>7</sup>

or individuals who left Akosombo for the city life and gained entry into the entrepreneurial world where they returned to open up hostels and other endeavors. Nonetheless, the small town of Akosombo mainly includes middle and low-income households where very few have access to piped water or bottled water. Akosombo does experience the selling of sachets as more people have ventured into nearby cities such as Accra where they bring back sachets to sell on the roadside. But most people from Akosombo rely on borehole water, which is extracted from underground. The wealthy farmers in Akosombo, like other well-off Ghanaians, typically store water bottles or have a polytank system in their house, which ensures a steady supply of safe drinking water.

Akosombo's colonial history is very different from Accra as they were largely left alone to their own devices during the colonial era to such an extent that they could continue with their traditional practices mostly uninterrupted. Therefore, the transition from a communal water system to privatization did not take place as rapidly as it did in Accra. Moreover, many of the systems that were mostly eradicated in Accra still continue in Akosombo today such as rain water harvesting.

Although piped water has been argued to lower chances of diarrhea, many Ghanaians are unable to access the expensive and usually safe piped water and thus turn to contaminated water sources<sup>8</sup>. Take Akosombo for example, in the past river water was perfectly safe but nowadays anyone who drinks from the river is akin to various water-borne illnesses and diseases. There are various reasons for this trend. Previously, traditional Ghanaian societies had their own mechanism in maintaining water sanitation. As Agyenim describes:

There were also rules that evolved under the customary regime for equitable use of water resources among communities through which a river or stream flows. Communities could easily come together to agree on the spots they allowed for animal watering, for drinking purposes or for washing and bathing. Often a community fetched water upstream for drinking and animal watering. Bathing activities were

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<sup>8</sup> Kosec, Katrina. "The Child Health Implications of Privatizing Africa's Urban Water Supply." *Journal of Health Economics*, vol. 35, 2014, pp. 1–19., doi:10.1016/j.jhealeco.2014.01.006.

undertaken downstream. These arrangements were religiously adhered to. One community's upstream is often another's downstream; but as long as the water use is not intense, the harm to the other communities could be kept within limits.

With the emergence of British colonial rule, water was no longer seen as communal. Consequently, people had less access to certain bodies of water to such an extent that they were forced to bathe, drink, and urinate in the same body of water<sup>9</sup>. Another alarming case involves countries such as America paying the Ghanaian government so that they can dump hazardous e-wastes from American companies into the rivers and lakes of Ghana.<sup>10</sup>

Known as EEE, electronics and electronic equipment have become a significant portion of Ghana's waste. Electronics have many harmful chemicals that when dismantled can leach out very hazardous gases. In order to avoid such harmful gases emitting in their country, wealthy nations export their E- waste to the Global South<sup>11</sup>. E-waste trade with countries such as the United States is a common practice where developed countries will dump their toxic waste onto developing countries alongside a paycheck for the government with the intention that this money will go towards development such as road construction and investment in public institutions<sup>12</sup>. Nonetheless, it is very well known that most of the money becomes part of a Swiss bank as many government officials cash the check<sup>13</sup>. If there isn't government corruption, the money normally ends up in helping pay high interest rates on loans from the Global North or international

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<sup>9</sup> Agyenim, Joseph B., and Joyeeta Gupta. "The Evolution of Ghana's Water Law and Policy." *Review of European Community & International Environmental Law* 19, no. 3 (2010): 339–50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9388.2010.00694.x>.

<sup>10</sup> Curkovic, Sime, Martin, Oteng-Ababio. *Sustainable Development: Authoritative and Leading Edge Content for Environmental Management*. "Electronic Waste Management in Ghana- Issues and Practices." Rijeka, Croatia: InTech, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Jack Caravanos, Edith E. Clarke, Carl S. Osei, and Yaw Amoyaw-Osei (2013) Exploratory Health Assessment of Chemical Exposures at E-Waste Recycling and Scrapyard Facility in Ghana. *Journal of Health and Pollution*: January 2013, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 11-22. <https://doi.org/10.5696/2156-9614-3.4.11>

<sup>12</sup> Curkovic, Sime, Martin, Oteng-Ababio. *Sustainable Development: Authoritative and Leading Edge Content for Environmental Management*. "Electronic Waste Management in Ghana- Issues and Practices." Rijeka, Croatia: InTech, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

monetary institutions<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, instead of capital to construct roads, developing countries become burdened with increased illness among their population due to toxic exposure from the hazardous waste<sup>15</sup>.

Ghana has fallen victim to these practices many times as e-waste has promised access to newer technologies such as cell phones. Additionally, the copper, gold, and silver components found in old cellphones for conduction are typically extracted to use as form of wealth<sup>16</sup>. However, these few lucrative benefits bring along a high level of mercury and other toxic gases in the country<sup>17</sup>. Akosombo houses numerous solid waste dump sites. Along with handling concentrated waste from Ghana itself as well as controlling the waste of other countries, the Ghanaian waste system is poorly equipped to handle waste at such scale<sup>18</sup>. These toxins seeps into the drinking water of towns such as Akosombo located in close proximity to an e-waste dump site<sup>19</sup>. Thus, aside from parasite exposure, people who drink the water are also regularly consuming toxins. Consequently, contamination and pollution run rampant affecting drinking water as well as the atmosphere.

The Global North specifically targeting countries with less regulatory government oversight serves as a calculated way to dump toxic chemicals on less powerful countries. The

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Cobbina, S., R. Kuleape, S. Dampare, W. Asare, and A. Duwiejuah. "Assessing the Fertilizer Utilization Potential of Municipal Solid Waste in Akosombo, Ghana." *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology* 4, no. 26 (October 2014): 3874–83. <https://doi.org/10.9734/bjast/2014/10631>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Cobbina, S., R. Kuleape, S. Dampare, W. Asare, and A. Duwiejuah. "Assessing the Fertilizer Utilization Potential of Municipal Solid Waste in Akosombo, Ghana." *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology* 4, no. 26 (October 2014): 3874–83. <https://doi.org/10.9734/bjast/2014/10631>.

<sup>19</sup> Jack Caravanos, Edith E. Clarke, Carl S. Osei, and Yaw Amoyaw-Osei (2013) Exploratory Health Assessment of Chemical Exposures at E-Waste Recycling and Scrapyard Facility in Ghana. *Journal of Health and Pollution*: January 2013, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 11-22. <https://doi.org/10.5696/2156-9614-3.4.11>

informal structure regarding Ghana's management of e-waste as well as the fact that 30% of e-waste sent to Ghana stems from antiquated electronics that cannot be re-used places Ghana at a disadvantage and ill-equipped to control the e-waste influx<sup>20</sup>. The lack of government oversight also presides in local endeavors as seen in the high rate of contamination found within sachet water and other informal water distribution aspects.

A study conducted in a Ghanaian orphanage found that 16 children had parasites such as flukes in their intestines due to their consumption of sachet water and cleaning with piped water<sup>21</sup>. The WHO reports that 70% of Ghanaians live in poverty and 70% of that subpopulation suffers from waterborne illnesses. This alarming statistic makes it apparent that there is insufficient attention toward improving water quality and access in Ghana. A study conducted in Kumasi, Ghana found significant counts of bacterial content in the sachets sold in the city calling for Ghana to monitor the sachet systems as it could trigger water-borne illnesses such as diarrhea, which can be lethal for some Ghanaians.<sup>22</sup> Ainuson describes the situation of a poor neighborhood in Accra:

There are enormous health risks associated with small-scale water providers. Local business people store water in poly tank containers—usually with a capacity of 1000 liters—with water from piped connections where it exists or tanker-delivered water. These poly tank containers are rarely cleaned and evidence of growing spirogyra around the tanks points to the quality of water in the tanks. The tanks mounted on water tankers, often manufactured from scrap metal, are also hardly ever cleaned. In an interview of twenty water tanker operators in Ashalley Botwe, the average cleaning time ranged from once a month to once every three months. The disturbing part was that drivers climbed into the tanks to clean them using laundry detergents containing bleach[...]Mobile water tankers cart stream water or other kind of untreated water for consumers when the intended use is for construction or outdoor use and cart treated water when the intended use is domestic. However, consumers have no way of knowing the source of water when it is delivered to them<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Duedu, K. O., Peprah, E., Anim-Baidoo, I., & Ayeh-Kumi, P. (2015). Prevalence of intestinal parasites and association with malnutrition at a Ghanaian orphanage. *Human Parasitic Diseases*, 7, 5-9. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1707334687?accountid=7118>

<sup>22</sup> Obiri-Danso, K., and K. Jones. "The Microbiological Quality of Drinking Water Sold on the Streets in Kumasi, Ghana." *Society for Applied Microbiology*, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd (10.1111), 8 Sept. 2003, sfamjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1046/j.1472-765X.2003.01403.x.

<sup>23</sup> Ainuson, Kweku G. "Urban Water Politics and Water Security in Disadvantaged Urban Communities in Ghana." *African Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2010).

Thus, the water bottled industry has produced “a dual market, a market where the rich buy safe water and the poor drink contaminated water and get sick” reflecting a greater concern of water-borne illnesses and deaths.<sup>24</sup>

The group who mainly suffer from these inequities concerning water are poor females who are more likely to be in contact with contaminated water sources as they are primarily responsible for domestic chores such as washing clothes as well as fetching water.<sup>25</sup> Due to this unequal exposure, these women serve as carriers of diseases or toxins that are eventually passed down to their offspring.<sup>26</sup> For instance, PCB, a banned manmade chemical and known endocrine disruptor, has been detected in abnormally high levels in the breast milk of Mohawk women in the U.S. who lived near a plant due to their consuming of the fish in the river.<sup>27</sup> With studies finding toxins ranging from lead to mercury in the drinking water of Ghana, one can only imagine the toxins that low-income Ghanaian women are exposed to and how that is passed on to their children.<sup>28</sup>

By using a feminist political ecologist framework, I show how the local, everyday lives of Ghanaian women and their access to water has been shaped by politics, colonialism, and unequal power distribution placing these females in a position of vulnerability. With little rights to challenge the current practice of how water is unfairly distributed, many impoverished Ghanaian women become susceptible to unfair prices, scams, and poor-quality water. Moreover,

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<sup>24</sup> Nasser, Latif, director. *Rotten. Rotten*, Zero Point Zero, 4 Oct. 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Truelove, Yaffa. “(Re-)Conceptualizing Water Inequality in Delhi, India through a Feminist Political Ecology Framework.” *Geoforum* 42, no. 2 (2011): 143–52. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.01.004>.

<sup>26</sup> Murphy 2017 *Alterlife-Decolonial Reaction*. pdf

<sup>27</sup> Winoa, Laduke, Akwesasne: Mohawk Mother’s Milk and PCBs, in *ALL OUR RELATIONS: NATIVE STRUGGLES FOR LAND AND LIFE* 11 (1999).

<sup>28</sup> Fisher, Michael B., et al. “Microbiological and Chemical Quality of Packaged Sachet Water and Household Stored Drinking Water in Freetown, Sierra Leone.” *Plos One*, vol. 10, no. 7, 2015, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0131772.

as their health deteriorates due to poor water access, they suffer from increased time off work, lose out on educational opportunities, and are flung into the ongoing cycle of poverty and inequity.

Consequently, the local and global are intertwined with larger systemic problems. For instance, Ghana was placed in a position of subservience to developed countries such as Britain that freely extracted labor and resources from the countries. This event placed many of these countries at a severe economic disadvantage. Colonialism also triggered an unorganized water system in present-day Ghana. This occurred because the rapid urbanization of cities in Ghana like Accra lead to an enormous demand on piped water that the antiquated pipes from the colonial era could not support. Thus, antiquated pipes placed during colonialism now lay broken with copper and lead seeping through<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, as many civilizations were forced to move from communal ownership of water to privatization, the sustainable practice of equitable sharing of water and sanitation methods became lost. As Africanist feminist scholars Assata Zerai and Brenda N. Sanya state:

West-centric development (as characterized by uneven development focused on urban areas, as a remnant of its colonial past, and by economic structural adjustment policies, a current neoliberal reality) [...] has deleterious effects on safe water and sanitation.<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, past atrocities created an environment in which the gap between rich and poor became so wide that the poor had no capacity to protect themselves from harmful drinking water while the rich could drink expensive imported bottled water. Therefore, water access involves race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Due to various reasons concerning historical events and current attitudes that will be discussed later in the paper, the Ghanaian government became ill-

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<sup>29</sup> Fisher, Michael B., et al. "Microbiological and Chemical Quality of Packaged Sachet Water and Household Stored Drinking Water in Freetown, Sierra Leone." *Plos One*, vol. 10, no. 7, 2015, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0131772.

<sup>30</sup> Zerai, Assata, and Brenda N. Sanya. *Safe Water, Sanitation, and Early Childhood Malnutrition in East Africa an African Feminist Analysis of the Lives of Women in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018.



equipped in providing an adequate water distribution system causing rogue actors to provide water that is still largely unregulated. Additionally, underserved Ghanaian women become most affected by these actions as they are excluded from the masculine spaces concerning decisions about water access.<sup>31</sup> Before addressing the historical events that shaped such a situation, we must first discuss the current academic debate regarding water privatization.

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<sup>31</sup> Truelove, Yaffa. "(Re-)Conceptualizing Water Inequality in Delhi, India through a Feminist Political Ecology Framework." *Geoforum* 42, no. 2 (2011): 143–52. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.01.004>.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review- the key debates surrounding the global privatization of water**

The surface of the water is beautiful, but it is no good to sleep on- Ghanaian Proverb

This literature review briefly addresses the academic debates over who should provide access to clean drinking water and determine the prerequisites necessary for such control by analyzing various case studies regarding water privatization ranging from South America to Africa. In order to navigate these debates, I ask the following questions: Where does equal access to clean drinking water come from? Who should provide services for this access?

With respect to water and health, a prevalent debate ensues as to who is best suited for effectively providing water services. From this debate, four compelling and unique perspectives emerge. As described previously, some argue that privatization of water will prompt multinational companies to serve as the sole provider for access to sanitary water encouraging competition and satisfying customer's needs. Others posit that the government, unmotivated by profit, must serve as the only holder of this enterprise. Meanwhile, proponents of neither privatization nor governments appeal to a social component by asserting that water must be a locally led initiative that evades corrupt, lethargic governments or profit-oriented companies as access to clean water should serve as an undisputed human right. Still others convey that in order to have clean drinking water, one must first acknowledge the danger of climate change and eliminate the practice of foreign land leasing, which drains the land of water for the sake of producing agricultural crops. Proponents of this view assert that this issue must be handled before even considering which sector should control water services. All of these viewpoints carry

a striking similarity as they connect the significance of clean drinking water to health as all concur that sanitary water has a direct result in ameliorating health in numerous developing countries by reducing chances of diarrhea, cholera and other deadly water-borne diseases. Nonetheless, they diverge in their attitudes towards determining who should provide drinking water and whether there exists a potential for ensuring equal access to drinking water.

Privatization of water directly improves the health, economic and social well-being of the community by reducing health risks, expanding leisurely time, and promoting healthy economic competition. Supporters of privatization believe private companies ensure not only equal access to water but also reduce systemic inequalities which improves individuals' livelihoods. For example, studies show that the privatization of water significantly decreases diarrhea by 2.6% in children age 5 or under who live in an urbanized area.<sup>32</sup> Piped water improves health because it increases reliance on clean water, which dissuades people from using alternative means of getting water that are normally unsanitary.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, piped water positively affects the poorest households the most as access to this water has drastically decreased their susceptibility to diarrhea and other water-related diseases and has eliminated their time spent on fetching water allowing impoverished children to engage in school activities<sup>34</sup>. As a result, piped water proves to disrupt social barriers. The time designated to fetching water diminishes time spent on work and creating livelihoods<sup>35</sup>. Thus, fetching water places those at risk of bad physical health and lack of education especially for women and children in sub-Saharan Africa who primarily fetch

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<sup>32</sup> Kosec, Katrina. "The Child Health Implications of Privatizing Africa's Urban Water Supply." *Journal of Health Economics*, vol. 35, 2014, pp. 1–19., doi:10.1016/j.jhealeco.2014.01.006.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Geere, Jo Anne, and Moa Cortobias. "Who Carries the Weight of Water? Fetching Water in Rural and Urban Areas and the Implications for Water Security." *Water Alternatives*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2017, pp. 513–540., <http://www.water-alternatives.org/index.php/alldoc/articles/vol10/v10issue2/368-a10-2-18/file>.

water<sup>36</sup>. Many proponents of this perspective concur that privatization serves as an effective means to improve people's lives, especially the urban poor, as private companies introduce technologies such as pipes to ensure access to sanitary water. These new technologies indirectly diminish inequalities as people who were initially burdened with the task of fetching water or were vulnerable to frequently contracting debilitating illnesses can now pursue other endeavors. Thus, although privatization does not aim to assist the poor, the literature reveals that their competitive nature indirectly ameliorates the lives of the urban poor. The competitive characteristic of corporations also triggers direct benefits.

Many advocates of privately owned water management argue that privatization leads to increased competition which encourages companies to produce the best services in order to earn customer satisfaction<sup>37</sup>. This drive for improvement sets a precedent for companies to perform public goods and discover efficient ways at obtaining and distributing water<sup>38</sup>. According to a survey, Ghanaians living in the urban cities of Accra, Cape Coast and Sunyani are willing to pay more for efficient water services revealing that privatization of water is socially accepted and beneficial as long as the companies perform on the customer's needs<sup>39</sup>. Therefore, the literature conveys that as long as private companies remain competitive, their drive for profit contains mechanisms that will actually uplift everyone in the long run. Although these are undeniable successes, proponents of privatization fail to give a credible case of equalizing access for all

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<sup>36</sup> Geere, Jo Anne, and Moa Cortobias. "Who Carries the Weight of Water? Fetching Water in Rural and Urban Areas and the Implications for Water Security." *Water Alternatives*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2017, pp. 513–540., <http://www.water-alternatives.org/index.php/alldoc/articles/vol10/v10issue2/368-a10-2-18/file>.

<sup>37</sup> Pamacheche, Fudzai. "Privatization in Sub-Saharan Africa-An Essential Route to Poverty Alleviation." *Taking Sides Clashing Views on African Issues* by William G. Mosley, McGraw Hill, 2009, pp. 74-86.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Vondolia, G. K. and Asenso-Boadi, F. M. (2016), Private Sector Participation in the Provision of Quality Drinking Water in Urban Areas of Ghana: What Do Households Want and Can Afford?." *S. Afr. J Econ*, 84: 245–259. doi:10.1111/saje.12099.

people as private companies are accused of shutting off water in poor rural communities<sup>40</sup>.

Therefore, critics of privatization propose that the government should secure the responsibility to equalize access to clean drinking water.

Proponents of the public sector believe that the government serves as the ideal provider for clean drinking water as governments, in multiple cases, improve water access and avoid unequal distribution of water. Privatization has failed because, unlike governments, companies are not held accountable for their actions as seen by the continuous violation of human rights in Bolivia, Tanzania and South Africa<sup>41</sup>. Even though governments can also violate human rights, the main argument implies that private companies have less of an incentive to protect the people since companies are mainly concerned with satisfying their paying customers. Consequently, they are more likely to infringe on certain human rights with regard to water access. In other words, private companies predominately consider an individual's ability to pay in determining who and when to provide water. On the other hand, governments mainly rely on severity of need as they have greater concern for the overall welfare of the people they rule. Therefore, proponents of this view acknowledge that the differing goals of the government and private companies undoubtedly reveal which sector should control water provision.

In 1985, under the rapid global shift to neoliberal thought, Bolivian President Estenssoro, issued DS21060 which privatized public goods, criminalized the once strong unions in Bolivia, and lead to massive unemployment as state-owned jobs, which amounted to 60% of Bolivian employment, became privatized<sup>42</sup>. Therefore, as people lost jobs, especially in the mining

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<sup>40</sup> Thompson, Ginger. "Water Tap Often Shut to South Africa Poor." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 29 May 2003, [www.nytimes.com/2003/05/29/world/water-tap-often-shut-to-south-africa-poor.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/29/world/water-tap-often-shut-to-south-africa-poor.html).

<sup>41</sup> Moyo, K. and Liebenberg, S. "The Privatization of Water Services: The Quest for Enhanced Human Rights Accountability." *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 37 no. 3, 2015, pp. 691-727. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/hrq.2015.0038.

<sup>42</sup> Olivera, Oscar, and Tom Lewis. *Cochabamba!: Water War in Bolivia*. South End Press, 2004.

industry, they no longer had the support of state-programs to lean on in a time of need leading to a further increase in the gap between the rich and poor<sup>43</sup>. This history facilitated the ability of water companies such as Suez and Bechtel to enter Bolivia and privatize fresh water<sup>44</sup>. When Aguas del Tunari, a subsidiary of U.S. construction company Bechtel, privatized the once government controlled water entity called SEMAPA in 1999, the Bolivian government passed a law titled Law 2029 which further legalized this deal but also gave considerable power for Aguas del Tunari to monopolize<sup>45</sup>. Aguas del Tunari made various promises to the government such as increasing water access to all Cochabamba residents, building a dam, and helping pay off Bolivia's debt<sup>46</sup>. Nonetheless, when Agua del Tunari gained control it made little effort to fulfill these promises.

Although privatization amounted to more coverage of people living in the cities of La Paz and El Alto in Bolivia, water companies failed to meet contract requirements<sup>47</sup>. This event led to imposing tariffs on water where at one point in time "Bechtel raised water rates from 30 to 300%"<sup>48</sup> resulting in public protests in Cochabamba termed Cochabamba water wars. These protests and key activists such as Bolivian Oscar Olivera brought these issues to light triggering the government to intervene and assume control<sup>49</sup>. The government's performance, although lackluster when compared to private companies, provides increased stability since economic incentives do not control the government in the same vein as private companies<sup>50</sup>. The

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Hailu, Degol, et al. "Privatization and Renationalization: What Went Wrong in Bolivia's Water Sector?" *World Development*, vol. 40, no. 12, Dec. 2012, pp. 2564–2577., doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.05.032.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Thirst. Anonymous Bullfrog Films, 2004. <https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/thirst>.

<sup>49</sup> Hailu, Degol, et al. "Privatization and Renationalization: What Went Wrong in Bolivia's Water Sector?" *World Development*, vol. 40, no. 12, Dec. 2012, pp. 2564–2577., doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.05.032.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

government's attention to various aspects other than profit serves as the main reason for this argument. Aside from the government's widespread concern for its people, proponents of this view suggest that the government is also more financially equipped to secure access to sanitary water.

Some academics posit the public-sector acts as the only sector that can fund large scale water development endeavors and it also has the capital to promote sustainable development and aid the poor whereas private companies do not have the economic capacity to accomplish all of these endeavors<sup>51</sup> Thus, even in cases where private participation has emerged, the government continues to play a prominent role in the control of water<sup>52</sup>. This outlook reveals how the government serves as a more powerful entity than private companies because even in cases where the private sector has taken over control of water, they still rely on the government when dealing with poor rural communities. Nonetheless, governments have failed to aid the poor due to the lethargic nature of many governments. For instance, the return of control to the Ghanaian government has been unsuccessful as almost half the population still lacks access to clean water<sup>53</sup>. Consequently, some argue that only civil society serves as the supreme provider for clean drinking water.

Others argue that the government and private companies are irrelevant when it comes to providing adequate water services, especially for the poor. Rather, civil society should bear the responsibility of providing equal access to sanitary water. The various cases highlighting the

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<sup>51</sup> Draper, Stephen E. "Limits to Water Privatization." *Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management*, vol. 134, no. 6, 2008, pp. 493–503., doi:10.1061/(asce)0733-9496(2008)134:6(493).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Safe Water Network. "Ghana." *Ghana / Safe Water Network*, 1 Jan. 1970, [www.safewaternetwork.org/countries-regions/ghana](http://www.safewaternetwork.org/countries-regions/ghana).

negative effects of public and private control of water dominates this argument. Both government participation and private participation in water services contributed to the cholera outbreak in South Africa that killed over 150,000, mostly poor, black South Africans in the year 2000<sup>54</sup>. Private companies, mainly large multinational corporations such as the French water company Suez, utilized cherry picking in order to avoid providing water to the poor.<sup>55</sup>

This action pushed the poor to desperately seek out unsanitary water.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, the government advanced full cost recovery systems of water and dismissed the constitutional promise to provide a lifeline support for the South African poor.<sup>57</sup> With regard to water, proponents of this argument view the government and private companies as hindrances that must be relinquished or greatly suppressed. In La Paz, privatized companies excluded people living in low income communities or in rural areas bordering the city by arguing that they were outside the city's limits<sup>58</sup>. When private companies eventually attempted to serve the poor, they frequently provided inadequate services such as leaky and poorly constructed pipes<sup>59</sup>. Similarly, Johannesburg Water, a private water company, implemented a new water service delivery in predominantly poor areas by installing prepaid water meters in the townships of Orange Farm and Soweto without the consent of the people living in these townships<sup>60</sup>. Since this has only

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<sup>54</sup> Bond, Patrick "The Political Roots of South Africa's Cholera Epidemic." *Sickness and Wealth: The Corporate Assault on Global Health*, by Meredith P. Fort et al., South End Press, 2004, pp. 120–128.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Budds, Jessica, and Gordon Mcgranahan. "Are the Debates on Water Privatization Missing the Point? Experiences from Africa, Asia and Latin America." *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2003, pp. 87–114., doi:10.1177/095624780301500222.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Harvey, Ebrahim "Managing the Poor by Remote Control: Johannesburg's Experiments with Prepaid Water Meters." *The Age of Commodity: Water Privatization in Southern Africa*, by David McDonald and Greg Ruiters, Rutledge, 2012, pp. 120–127.



been implemented in poor areas, community backlash transpired as water immediately shuts off when the poor cannot afford to pay<sup>61</sup>. These events have triggered the formation of coalitions against privatization<sup>62</sup>.

Thus, civil society groups routinely highlight the negative effects of private and public control. NGOs, community-level organizations and small-scale private providers play a significant role in providing sanitary water as seen in Tanzania where such organizations have taken over the control of water that was largely relinquished by the public realm<sup>63</sup>. Whether in Africa or South America private companies have furtively cut out the poor as their need for profit clouded their morality. Moreover, the main argument reveals that only a few private companies dominate water control allowing these transgressions to take place. Therefore, civil society serves as a positive alternative to private companies and cumbersome governments as they emerge to resist the control of water by these entities. Aside from this resistance, civil society is also seen as a refreshing substitute to the sneaky practices of private companies.

Aside from Bolivia's water wars in Cochabamba, successful formations of civil society have occurred such as the National CAP of Water, which formed in Ghana in 2001 to counter World Bank initiated project to transfer state ownership of water services to multinational corporations<sup>64</sup>. Their protest led to a 3-year delay on the privatization project as corruption and scandal among two major private corporations came to light<sup>65</sup>. Therefore, civil society has been

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<sup>61</sup> Harvey, Ebrahim "Managing the Poor by Remote Control: Johannesburg's Experiments with Prepaid Water Meters." *The Age of Commodity: Water Privatization in Southern Africa*, by David McDonald and Greg Ruiters, Rutledge, 2012, pp. 120–127.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Budds, Jessica, and Gordon Mcgranahan. "Are the Debates on Water Privatization Missing the Point? Experiences from Africa, Asia and Latin America." *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2003, pp. 87–114., doi:10.1177/095624780301500222.

<sup>64</sup> Etego, Rudolf and Grusky, Sara "The New Face of Conditionality: The World Bank and Water Privatization of Ghana." *The Age of Commodity: Water Privatization in Southern Africa*, by David McDonald and Greg Ruiters, Rutledge, 2012, pp. 275-291.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

successful in spreading the abuses of private and public control of water. Civil society groups have also experienced successful means of attaining water security for the poor and therefore improving health. In India, community leaders such as Rajendra Singh has galvanized over 500,000 locals to practice rain water harvesting to serve as a direct response against water privatizations in his village named Rajasthan in 1984<sup>66</sup>. Through his efforts, the village in 2004 has experienced an abundant access to water and economic success within the village as fewer locals migrated to the city in search of a better life and village girls were able to attend school as they no longer needed to fetch water<sup>67</sup>. As Rajendra Singh states “local control of water can save our communities and the world’s water”<sup>68</sup>. Nonetheless, civil society groups have been accused of harboring ulterior motives and pursuing corrupt goals as seen in the prevalent contamination of water sachets in Ghana<sup>69</sup>. Consequently, some argue that the existing debate should not revolve around which entity should control water but rather ensuring that climate change and the increase of foreign land acquisition fails to persist.

The final school of thought focuses on global trends that exacerbate water shortages. Globalization acts as the culprit of water scarcity and diminished water security in low-income countries while climate change further exacerbates this problem. Proponents of this viewpoint believe that before engaging in a discussion over who should control drinking water, these underlying issues require solutions. Starting in 2008, Saudi Arabia, China and South Korea realized that agricultural expansion in their lands quickly drains their water supply<sup>70</sup>. This

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<sup>66</sup> Thirst. Anonymous Bullfrog Films, 2004. <https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/thirst>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Obiri-Danso, K., and K. Jones. “The Microbiological Quality of Drinking Water Sold on the Streets in Kumasi, Ghana.” *Letters in Applied Microbiology*, Wiley/Blackwell (10.1111), 8 Sept. 2003, [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1046/j.1472-765X.2003.01403.x](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1046/j.1472-765X.2003.01403.x).

<sup>70</sup> Anon. “Buying Farmland Abroad: Outsourcing Third Wave.” *The Economist*, The Economist, 23 May 2009, [www.economist.com/node/13692889](http://www.economist.com/node/13692889).

realization prompted these nations to start leasing land in low income countries with the intent to grow crops and export them back to their homelands<sup>71</sup>. This practice has rapidly decreased the water supply in many African nations since roughly 80% of freshwater in Africa is used for agriculture<sup>72</sup>. This emergence of land leasing has triggered huge repercussions as massive amounts of water is currently whisked away. Anon expresses that land leasing significantly mirrors imperialism of the banana republics in which companies from wealthy countries extracted resources and cheap labor from developing countries<sup>73</sup>. Furthermore, this extractive relationship frequently materializes in countries that have a relationship with their former colonizer<sup>74</sup>. Thus, the literature alludes to the dependency theory in which the core extracts from the periphery. The emergence of large scale farming, the introduction of hydro-electrical systems and unsustainable practices have accounted for massive water loss<sup>75</sup>. Moreover, chemical pollution due to agricultural techniques and industrialization has a direct impact on the water quality in Africa and has contributed to over 50% of hospitalizations in the continent of Africa<sup>76</sup>.

With new players such as China showing interest in Africa, proponents of this view call for individuals to be wary of a new form of imperialism in which powerful countries decimate the host countries land and resources with the sole intention of benefiting themselves. As a result, proponents suggest that in order to ensure equal access to water, determining which sector should provide the water remains irrelevant because clean water will become easily accessible

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> <Water, Health and Agriculture in Africa Forum>*Field Actions Science Reports*, Meeting Reports, 11 April 2012, <http://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/1370>.

<sup>73</sup> Anon. "Buying Farmland Abroad: Outsourcing Third Wave." *The Economist*, The Economist, 23 May 2009, [www.economist.com/node/13692889](http://www.economist.com/node/13692889).

<sup>74</sup> <Water, Health and Agriculture in Africa Forum>*Field Actions Science Reports*, Meeting Reports, 11 April 2012, <http://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/1370>.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

only if everyone agrees to resist imperialism under the guise of globalization and to protect the environment. Proponents of this view posit that individuals must not only exhibit concern over foreign encroachment of water and the rise of pollution but must also be concerned with global warming.

In January 29, 2018 the Theewaterskloof Dam, which is the largest water reserve in South Africa, contained just around 26% of the water that it normally contains<sup>77</sup>. Due to climate change, the water reserves, from which the South African population relies on for water, has rapidly decreased<sup>78</sup>. Consequently, the environment plays a critical role on water access. As droughts occur frequently, water theft has become a paramount problem as South African farmers allegedly stole 1.58 billion kilometers of water in a year<sup>79</sup>. Meanwhile, multinational companies such as Nestlé have entered countries with lax or non-existent water laws where they extract an abominable amount of water for free<sup>80</sup>. As the Economist reports:

Water shortages have provided the hidden impulse behind many land deals. Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, the chairman of Nestlé, claims: “The purchases weren’t about land, but water. For with the land comes the right to withdraw the water linked to it, in most countries essentially a freebie that increasingly could be the most valuable part of the deal.” He calls it “the great water grab”.<sup>81</sup>

From these various sources of evidence, much of the literature is deeply concerned about environmental issues and its connection to water security. Proponents of this view believe that arguing over who should control water provision is unnecessary and downright inane as the actual issue stems from environmental degradation. As wealthy countries begin to experience water scarcity in their own lands, they resort to appealing to poorer countries’ need for money in

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<sup>77</sup> Christian, Bonnie. “As Day Zero Nears, Cape Town’s Drought Is a Stark Reminder: Climate Change Can Cause Conflict.” *WIRED*, UK, 6 Feb. 2018, [www.wired.co.uk/article/cape-town-water-crisis-day-zero-climate-change](http://www.wired.co.uk/article/cape-town-water-crisis-day-zero-climate-change).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Hope, Johnson; Nigel, South and Reece, Waters. “Eco-Crime and Fresh Water.” *Greening Criminology in the 21st Century: Contemporary Debates and Future*, by Mathew Hall, Routledge, 2016, pp. 131–143.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> “Outsourcing’s Third Wave.” *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, [www.economist.com/international/2009/05/21/outsourcings-third-wave](http://www.economist.com/international/2009/05/21/outsourcings-third-wave).

order to gain access to land abroad.<sup>82</sup> Besides governments, multinational companies and even American universities with large endowments have taken part in the practice of “land grabbing”<sup>83</sup> For instance, American universities like Harvard, Vanderbilt, Spellman, and Iowa University have all been connected with hedge fund companies that invest in land in Africa<sup>84</sup> According to an Oakland Institute report, Emergent Asset Management a private UK based LLC founded by former traders of JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs has been heavily involved in land grabs in Africa. The company detects African countries such as Mozambique and South Africa with lax tax laws and land laws<sup>85</sup>. Through its agricultural fund called African Agriland, it purchases land displacing locals and squatters who have no formal ownership of the land and transforms the land into agricultural powerhouse that primarily exports cash crops to Europe<sup>86</sup>. Consequently, the hedge fund and their investors benefit at the expense of the local community. Reports have shown that many of these contracted deals are performed without the locals’ knowledge or consent<sup>87</sup>.

Aside from the environmental repercussions, past colonial relationships influence developing countries attitudes to water conservation. With the prominence of globalization, former colonizers can serve as a faulty model that developing countries mistakenly follow. Proponents of this view exhibit that a combination of these factors serves as the main issue to address rather than arguing over certain sectors’ capacities. Nevertheless, the counterargument

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<sup>82</sup> Anon. “Buying Farmland Abroad: Outsourcing Third Wave.” *The Economist*, The Economist, 23 May 2009, [www.economist.com/node/13692889](http://www.economist.com/node/13692889).

<sup>83</sup>

Oakland institute: <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files>

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

suggests that globalization and land leasing aids poorer countries as they introduce new technologies, practices and stabilize economies<sup>88</sup>.

Various dynamic responses to ensuring clean drinking water access all incorporate their challenges and benefits. The first viewpoint fails to adequately address the effects of the poor living in rural areas who are most likely not to have access to piped water. Although the authors provide significant evidence on the benefits to the urban poor, the complete lack of evidence and dearth of case studies concerning the rural poor implies that privatized water may not have such a beneficial effect on this community. This is further proven by the massive accounts of private companies treating poor rural communities unfairly as seen in the South African and Bolivia cases. The proponents for government control of water suffer a similar setback as many governments cannot sufficiently provide water to all communities and their cumbersome nature leads to frequent breakdowns and mismanagement.

Moreover, the authors for this argument tend to homogenize all governments rather than considering the various forms of governments that do exist. Analyzing the type of government is largely missed in these debates. As water privatization in developing countries actually occurred during authoritarian regimes. Canadian social activist Naomi Klein states in her book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* that a rapid shift from public goods to privatization must involve a state with some form of an authoritarian nature to enforce such a drastic change leading to immense human rights infringements<sup>89</sup>. Thus, different forms of government can affect the government's level of concern for the people's well-being and access to certain public goods<sup>90</sup>. Therefore, stating that all governments are mostly concerned about how the people view

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<sup>88</sup> Mosley, Layna, and Saika Uno. *Racing to the Bottom or Climbing to the Top? Economic Globalization and Collective Labor Rights*. 2007. pdf.

<sup>89</sup> Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine*. Penguin Books Ltd., 2007.

<sup>90</sup> de Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, and George W. Downs. *Development and Democracy*. 2005. [www.jstor.org/stable/20031707](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20031707).

them appears slightly inaccurate. Both arguments fail to address the apparent environmental factors that directly affect water security. Most of the authors who support the first two claims either briefly mention the impact of climate change or treat it as an isolated case. The authors should incorporate climate change more naturally into their arguments because climate change plays an enormous factor in inducing water scarcity. Since water scarcity can lead to increases in water prices on the private side and government inability to provide water for a growing population on the public side addressing environmental issues as a legitimate source serves as a priority. The limitation to civil society taking control over water provision stems from the literature's failure to acknowledge that not all civil society groups have a positive agenda. With a solid understanding of the scholarly discourses concerning water privatization, my paper takes a narrower account on the current debate by analyzing how water privatization affected local communities in Ghana.

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# Chapter 3: The Pre-colonial and colonial history of Ghana

*Money is sharper than a sword-Ghanaian Proverb*

## **Mami Wata: Reconciling the overseas foreigners**

Before understanding the impacts of water privatization in Ghana, gaining insight into Ghanaians' pre-colonial interactions with foreigners of European descent as well as understanding pre-colonial practices in accessing water will aid in grasping the complexity of Ghana's current water distribution system within the specific Ghanaian context. Mami Wata is a water goddess with numerous followers in West Africa and the Caribbean.<sup>91</sup> The goddess possesses various beneficial qualities as she can bring financial prosperity, cure issues relating to procreation, and aid in female advancement and empowerment.<sup>92</sup> However, Mami Wata believers also view her as dangerous and unpredictable. For instance, in Ghana she is considered as having the power to murder a person's wife out of sheer jealousy.<sup>93</sup>

The term Mami Wata originates from pidgin English that developed during West Africans' trading with Europeans.<sup>94</sup> The concept of Mami Wata emerges from West African attitudes towards Europeans through such interactions. Although Africans living in certain areas held an established practice of worshipping water spirits before European contact, many of those Africans viewed Europeans as foreigners coming from overseas and accompanied by the female

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<sup>91</sup> Stipriaan, Alex Van. "Watramama/Mami Wata." *Matatu*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2003, pp. 321–337., doi:10.1163/18757421-90000459.

<sup>92</sup> Drewal, Henry John, et al. "Mami Wata: Arts for Water Spirits in Africa and Its Diasporas." *African Arts*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2008, pp. 60–83., doi:10.1162/afar.2008.41.2.60.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.



figures etched onto their ships, Africans projected their views and experiences with Europeans onto the creation of Mami Wata.<sup>95</sup> As art historian and anthropologist Henry John Drewal states:

One of the earliest European interpretations of African ideas about Europeans was made by Cadamosto, who voyaged to the western coast of Africa near Cape Verde in the years 1455 and 1456 (see Crone 1937:20-21). In 1700, during a voyage to the islands of Bissao and Bissagos, the Frenchman Andre Brue reported an "Odd Ceremony of sacrificing a Cock": [A] canoa approached with five Negros; one of whom came on Deck, holding a Cock in his left Hand, and a Knife in his right. After kneeling a Minute before the Sieur Brue, without speaking, he rose; and turning to the East, cut the Cock's Throat, and placing himself on his Knees again, let some Drops of Blood fall on the Sieur Brue's Feet. He did the same to the Mast and Pump of the Ship, and returning to the General, presented him the Cock. The General, ordering him a Bumper of Brandy, asked him the Reasons of this Ceremony. He replied, that the People of his Country looked on the Whites as the Gods of the Sea; that the mast was a Divinity that made the Ship walk, and the Pump was a Miracle, since it could make Water rise- up, whose natural Property is to descend (in Astley 1968:104-5).<sup>96</sup>

Thus, some Africans reconciled the arrival of Europeans with the creation of Mami Wata.

In addition, Mami Wata may have some monetary associations illustrated by ethnologists Barbara Frank's analysis:

West Africans got to know the majority of European colonial officers, merchants, and many missionaries as wifeless, childless, and personally isolated. In this context, the wealth and power of Europeans seemed even more miraculous, since in West Africa wealth and power were tied to security in a large family and among relatives. So Mami Wata is a projection of the European model not only with regard to her wealth, love of luxury, and powers, but also with regard to the loneliness she exacts. Her European appearance and her possession of modern luxury goods symbolize antisocial behavior according to traditional West African values. Although people with closer contact to Europeans might have appreciated the commitment of some administrators and missionaries to their duties, many Africans saw the strange colonial lifestyle of the whites as the essence of individualism and greed. Yet, since Europeans were not only successful but also taught their way of life in schools and churches as something of high human value, Mami Wata, as the symbol of this lifestyle, could not be absolutely rejected. Rather, an individual is permitted to choose between a life with or without her. He or she may reject community-oriented economic morals and follow his or her unrestrained personal goals.<sup>97</sup>

Starting with the colonial era, everything that Mami Wata represents and how she is depicted is deliberately and distinctly un-African. For instance, Mami Wata is portrayed as a foreigner of European descent who is considered the Mother of Water even though she has no kin or offspring.<sup>98</sup> Additionally, she is frequently depicted as only having half of her body which vastly differs from the traditional African depictions of figures bearing the full body.<sup>99</sup> Over the centuries,

<sup>95</sup> Stipriaan, Alex Van. "Watramama/Mami Wata." *Matatu*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2003, pp. 321–337., doi:10.1163/18757421-90000459.

<sup>96</sup> Drewal, Henry John. "Performing the Other: Mami Wata Worship in Africa." *Tdr* (1988-), vol. 32, no. 2, 1988, p. 160., doi:10.2307/1145857.

<sup>97</sup> Frank, Barbara. "Permitted and Prohibited Wealth: Commodity-Possessing Spirits, Economic Morals, and the Goddess Mami Wata in West Africa." *Ethnology*, vol. 34, no. 4, 1995, p. 331., doi:10.2307/3773945.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Stipriaan, Alex Van. "Watramama/Mami Wata." *Matatu*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2003, pp. 321–337., doi:10.1163/18757421-90000459.

Mami Wata's portrayal has drastically and frequently changed as "depictions of her have been profoundly influenced by representations of ancient, indigenous African water spirits, European mermaids and snake charmers."<sup>100</sup> Spanning from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, "the majority of overseas foreigners seen by Africans were Western Europeans, followed by [Lebanese] and Indians. All were associated with commerce, that is, wealth brought from overseas."<sup>101</sup> Consequently, images of Mami Wata also blend with that of "Hindu gods and goddesses and Christian and Muslim [saints]."<sup>102</sup> Thus, Mami Wata became enmeshed with abundant and diverse representations of the foreigner.

By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mami Wata became a homogenization of most African water spirits.<sup>103</sup> The sheer number and popularity of Mami Wata among many African nations and the commonality of her powers, stories, and depictions revealed the common attitude that Africans held towards Europeans as wealthy, foreign, and antisocial but also served as a sign of globalization's power.<sup>104</sup> As Barbara Frank states "[s]ome hold that the mass popularity of the Mami Wata cult [in the present day] is a reaction against and an individualistic critique of the postcolonial construction of national culture with their emphasis of national authenticity."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Drewal, Henry John, et al. "Mami Wata: Arts for Water Spirits in Africa and Its Diasporas." *African Arts*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2008, pp. 60–83., doi:10.1162/afar.2008.41.2.60.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Stipriaan, Alex Van. "Watramama/Mami Wata." *Matatu*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2003, pp. 321–337., doi:10.1163/18757421-90000459.

<sup>104</sup> Frank, Barbara. "Permitted and Prohibited Wealth: Commodity-Possessing Spirits, Economic Morals, and the Goddess Mami Wata in West Africa." *Ethnology*, vol. 34, no. 4, 1995, p. 331., doi:10.2307/3773945.

<sup>105</sup> Stipriaan, Alex Van. "Watramama/Mami Wata." *Matatu*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2003, pp. 321–337., doi:10.1163/18757421-90000459.

Understanding the complex history behind Mami Wata works as a viable tool in analyzing Ghanaians' adoption or resistance to certain Western ideals such as privatization of water.

### **Pre-colonial water laws:**

Pre-colonial Ghana exemplified an attitude of water as a common good. Private ownership of water was non-existent in customary law as Ghanaians typically carried the notion that everyone should share water. The tindas, also knowns as fetish priests, and chiefs were in charge of maintaining and enforcing the laws regarding water and other environmental sources.

There were rules that prohibited (a) people from farming close to river banks which were considered the abode of river gods; and (b) human activities in certain sacred forests and groves. The peculiar nature of the traditional institutions or the indigenous culture on environmental protection and water resource management emanated from the reverence that the people had for ancestors and their belief in the power of the earth and water bodies. The people believed that the earth and water bodies have spirits of their own and that the ancestors were the immediate spiritual custodians of the land, water and their resources<sup>106</sup>

### **Colonial water laws**

In 1897 the power wielded by the tindas and chiefs soon diminished as the British crown established in 1874 forcefully and haphazardly integrated its laws, customs, and culture into Ghanaian life<sup>107</sup>. By the 1900s, water in Ghana became a guarded resource codified into law under British rule<sup>108</sup>. However, many Ghanaians continued to go about their traditional means of their relationship to water until punishment became more stringent. When the Rivers Ordinance was established, traditional access to water drastically fell as Agyenim describes:

The enactment of the River's Ordinance was the first attempt at regulating water use for other purposes apart from domestic use. A section of the Ordinance states that it 'shall be unlawful to pump, divert, or by any means cause water to flow from any river, for purposes of irrigation, mines or factories or to generate power without a license from the Minister'<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Agyenim, Joseph B., and Joyeeta Gupta. "The Evolution of Ghanas Water Law and Policy." Review of European Community & International Environmental Law 19, no. 3 (2010): 339–50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9388.2010.00694.x>.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Agyenim, Joseph B., and Joyeeta Gupta. "The Evolution of Ghanas Water Law and Policy." Review of European Community & International Environmental Law 19, no. 3 (2010): 339–50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9388.2010.00694.x>.

This new law was one of many laws that drastically altered many Ghanaians access to water. Aside from laws banning the free extraction of water for irrigation purposes, other colonial laws affected domestic water interactions. For instance, many Ghanaians who were used to fetching water from rivers were now forced to a small part of the river to defecate, urinate, bathe, and drink. This made it more likely for Ghanaians to contract diseases.

Alongside the loss of accessing quality water, many Ghanaians experienced a spiritual loss in their connection to water. The cultural practices and celebration of water which was integral in maintaining a communal appreciation as well as a motive to protect water sources from being contaminated became difficult to uphold under colonial law. In all the sharp change between how water was viewed in pre-colonial to colonial times foreshadowed a common practice of foreign encroachment on Ghanaians access and organization of water. As colonialism carried racist diction that many Africans later internalized, it aided in upholding Western practices as superior and as an exemplary model that all must follow. The shattering of communal water systems as well as the birth of private land and regulating water access lead to a complete reordering of Ghanaian life. In other words, these laws criminalized the previous communal life of Ghanaians based entirely on a system of sharing resources. This criminalization aided in vilifying Ghanaian practices and uplifting Western practices that became a prominent feature in Ghanaian politics and water policy in the coming centuries. The story of Mami Wata foreshadows a deeper influence; a colonial attitude of looking towards foreigners to model and change Ghanaian practices that will resurface time and time again long after the end of the Western exploration and the colonial era in Ghana.



## Chapter 4: A new global order

*The length of the rope determines the movement of the goat – African proverb*

### **The Berlin Conference: You're Missing some Seats at the Table**

The Berlin Conference's carving up of Africa created a precedent to view the continent that lacked a nation-state environment at the time as expendable and ever so giving. With the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, Germany emerged as the victor and hungry for land to exploit, colonized East Africa. France suffering from defeat felt compelled to wield its power by colonizing land in Africa. The colonization of Africa occurred not merely as a result of war but also due to social, political, and economic factors. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, stories of authors, missionaries and explorers, who were some of the first Europeans to venture into Africa without the intent to trade, described the continent as a dark place filled with savagery, cannibalism and despair in dire need of salvation and enlightenment.<sup>110</sup> Some European countries took it upon themselves to control and hence "rescue" Africa through imperialism with the ultimate goal of enlightening the African.<sup>111</sup> Ideas of the "white man's burden" and Social Darwinism all aided in creating a racist ideology that fueled the justification for conquering Africa.<sup>112</sup> Other European countries, included this racist mindset but also viewed Africa as a new

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<sup>110</sup> Jarosz, Lucy. "Constructing the Dark Continent: Metaphor as Geographic Representation of Africa." *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, vol. 74, no. 2, 1992, pp. 105–115., doi:10.1080/04353684.1992.11879634.

<sup>111</sup> Brantlinger, Patrick. "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1985, pp. 166–203., doi:10.1086/448326.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

market source or an area to extract raw materials to fuel their booming industries.<sup>113</sup> As the Europeans were uninformed with the complex social and cultural systems within Africa as well as the vastness and diversity of ethnic groups residing in this massive continent, the random drawing of borders lumped various ethnic groups into one newly constructed region and/or split other ethnic groups apart foreshadowing ethnic tensions and social upheavals still experienced today in many African nations of the present-day. Moreover, the fact that not a single African was present during the Berlin Conference further exemplifies the sheer lack of respect that many European felt towards Africans. As scholar Sheldon Gellar who specializes in African history states

Although the European occupation of Africa was well under way by 1870, the year 1885 is a useful date to mark the beginning of the colonial era because of the historic importance of the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, which legitimized the “Scramble for Africa” by formally sanctioning the partition of the continent among several European powers.<sup>114</sup>

Due to differing reasons for European countries colonizing Africa, colonized areas exhibited drastically different systems and social circumstances. During colonialization, there were various forms of resistance. When France attempted to colonize certain areas in West Africa, Samori Touré “organized one of the most spectacular examples of resistance to the imposition of European rule, using guerrilla tactics which delayed the completion of France’s occupation of French West Africa for nearly two decades.”<sup>115</sup> Nonetheless, due to an already unequal disadvantage from the extraction of wealth and peoples during the slave trade, many African countries were not positioned to acquire the equivalent European military technology.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Gellar, Sheldon. “The Colonial Era.” *Africa*, by Phyllis M. Martin and Patrick O'Meara, Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 122–139.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Rodney, Walter, et al. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Verso, 2018.

Only Ethiopia, which had a strong history of military prowess and technology due to their early access to European military technology and a history of leaders who espoused a strong military structure, was able to prevent colonial invasion.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, in many parts of Africa, leaders did not consider Europeans as enemies and partnered with Europeans to destroy rival ethnic groups.<sup>118</sup>

Even though “the imposition of colonial rule eventually led to the abolition of slavery,” a practice that had depleted Africa of a productive work force and chaotically changed local societies and economies<sup>119</sup>, it also signaled the termination “of African political, economic and cultural autonomy [and] the transformation of Africa’s elites and masses alike into colonial subjects with few political and civil rights.”<sup>120</sup> As Europeans settled into some African nations they brought a version of superiority in which the African was considered inferior and thus subservient. Consequently, the “new traditions [that the Europeans brought] reflected a feudal, patriarchal ethic rather than the capitalist ethic which had been so instrumental in transforming European structures.”<sup>121</sup> This racist and hierarchical structure was more pronounced in some areas than others. For instance, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia which had “relatively large white settler populations” exhibited “the greatest resistance to African equality [due to] relationships between Europeans and Africans that most closely approximated the master-slave model of the colonial system.”<sup>122</sup> Moreover, “smaller European colonial powers such as Belgium and Portugal were more involved with their African possessions than were Britain, France, Italy

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<sup>117</sup> Gellar, Sheldon. “The Colonial Era.” *Africa*, by Phyllis M. Martin and Patrick O'Meara, Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 122–139.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Lovejoy, P. “The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of Literature,” *Journal of African History* 1989

<sup>120</sup> Gellar, Sheldon. “The Colonial Era.” *Africa*, by Phyllis M. Martin and Patrick O'Meara, Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 122–139.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.



and Germany which were preoccupied with big power politics in Europe” leading to differences in the forms and amount of oppression experienced by Africans living in the colonies.<sup>123</sup> In the case of Ghana, British fairly laid back and hands-off practice of colonialism created a unique environment for certain areas over others. As Gellar states

British reputation as a liberal colonial power was based largely on its policies in West Africa whereby a small number of Africans could vote and participate in modern representative institutions even during the earliest phases of colonial rule. Each British colony in West Africa was divided into a “colony”, whose inhabitants were governed by British law and granted political representation in municipal councils, and a “protectorate.” Unlike the “colonies” centered on the coastal towns such as [...] Accra, the “protectorates” in the interior were administered through traditional African leaders and institutions or through newly constituted “native administrations,” often organized along ethnic lines and headed by traditional chief.<sup>124</sup>

Nonetheless, colonialism began to fade with the emergence of World War II. The end of the war “discredited the racist ideologies which had served as the original rationale for European colonization, heightened African aspirations for self-government,” and debilitated many countries grasp on their empires.<sup>125</sup>

### **Bretton Woods: Keynesianism to neoliberalism**

The end of World War II spawned a new era of powerful nations. The victorious and capitalist countries such as the United States and England gained full control over the fates of Germany and the Soviet Union. These empowered nations also had considerable control on the newly independent nations that many of these nations had once colonized. Hence, the Bretton Woods Conference, a conference lead by the winners of World War II to determine the economic fate of the losers, used capitalism as a guide in forming international laws for the economy such as creating exchange rates and formulating global financial institutions which included the World Bank and IMF. Although the Bretton Woods conference intended to alleviate the losers’

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

economic and social situation, the winners' exclusion of the losers and the newly independent nations of former colonizers left many of these countries disempowered and voiceless.<sup>126</sup>

This event echoed a similar practice in the Scramble for Africa as no African was invited to participate in the conference, even though many colonized Africans fighting under their respective empires aided in the victory of World War II. Additionally, many regions within Africa were seeking independence such as present-day Ghana and Nigeria. In all, this exclusivity set the stage for later as the World Bank and IMF became predominately controlled and influenced by the West and its interests. During the Bretton Woods conference, America, the superpower of the time and who still continues to dominate the agenda and funding of the World Bank, framed the institution's outlook.<sup>127</sup> Keynesian economics, a belief in increasing government intervention when needed in the free market served as a cornerstone of the American economy and other developed nations.<sup>128</sup> However, Americans guided by special interests abandoned Keynesian thought during the conference.<sup>129</sup>

World Bank and IMF policies thus became inextricably linked to American economic context. For instance, a 1970's recession and the Vietnam War accompanied by stagflation forced Nixon, the president of America at the time, to delink the dollar from gold.<sup>130</sup> This act, although an act of weakness as it devalued the U.S. dollar, reduced its debt to other countries while hiking up interest rates, an act that devastated poorer countries.<sup>131</sup> This event showed how dependent most of the Global South was on America to such an extent that a blow to the

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<sup>126</sup> Ellwood, Wayne. "The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization." *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 2009, pp. 29-63

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid

<sup>129</sup> Ibid

<sup>130</sup> Ibid

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

American economy had even more devastating impacts in the Global South. During this time, “the debt of the non-oil producing Third World increased five-fold between 1972-1982, reaching a staggering \$612 billion”.<sup>132</sup> Guyanese historian Walter Rodney’s argument of dependency theory takes form as less developed countries due to past histories of oppression are still inevitably dependent on their former oppressors.<sup>133</sup> Specifically, a new version of the free market concept known as neoliberalism emerged calling for privatization of public goods in less developed countries.<sup>134</sup>

When Margaret Thatcher and Reagan began to embrace neoliberalism in their own countries with Thatcher leading England as the first country to privatize public entities such as the mining sector in the 1980s, the World Bank and IMF moved rapidly with SAPs to do the same in developing countries.<sup>135</sup> SAPs known as structural adjustment programs are loans with stringent conditions for the beneficiary country to follow accordingly. SAPs were frequently given to many African countries still recovering from significant damage of the slave trade, colonialism, imperialism, increasing debt and other forms of inequity while also dealing with despotic leaders that frequently stole the countries’ money. The dependency already entrenched in Ghana due to an unequal, global power distribution made it so Ghana had no ability to consider other options.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid

<sup>133</sup> Rodney, Walter, et al. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Verso, 2018.

<sup>134</sup> Ellwood, Wayne. “The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization.” *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 2009, pp. 29-63

<sup>135</sup> Spronk, Susan. “The Politics of Water Privatization in the Third World.” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 39, no. 1 (2007): 126-31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0486613406296937>.

In all, the World Bank and IMF became staunch advocates of privatization with Chile's Shock therapy in 1985.<sup>136</sup> Shock therapy involves the sudden transition from public ownership to private ownership as well as the immediate termination of price controls and subsidies. In Chile, privatization devastated the lower and middle-class community who relied on publicly owned jobs to operate.<sup>137</sup> Therefore, the sudden privatization of these public entities which later placed Chile as the "fastest growing economy in South America" came "at a very high human price."<sup>138</sup> Nonetheless, neoliberal advocates viewed Chile's rapid climb to economic success as a fortuitous sign and antidote to pass on to the rest of the Global South.<sup>139</sup>

With regards to privatization, the striking dissimilarity between the Global North and Global South makes apparent the unequal structures and practices. The Global North primarily experienced a lethargic transition from public ownership to private control as many public entities were partially privatized while some remained completely public. For example, the United States did not fully privatize all public goods as it continued a welfare program and various other government-run entities. Today, the majority of water is still owned by the government. Ironically as state subsidies that were immediately terminated in developing countries encountering shock therapy, state-sponsored programs and goods remained an integral component of America.

The United States took on a hypocritical role as the government called for privatization abroad while still subsidizing maize and wheat creating a surplus<sup>140</sup>. This surplus enables

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<sup>136</sup> Spronk, Susan. "The Politics of Water Privatization in the Third World." *Review of Radical Political Economics* 39, no. 1 (2007): 126-31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0486613406296937>.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Jihan el-Tahari. *The Price of Aid*. (2004) Film

American crops to dominate in global trade as maize and wheat can outcompete that of other countries due to its cheap price<sup>141</sup>. With developing countries, the IMF and World Bank incorporated a shock therapy like recipe when creating the SAPs as these institutions doled out loans to the Global South with the intention that these countries would rapidly privatize in a blink of an eye. Moreover, many of these countries burdened by debt had no choice but to follow the IMF demands.

It was during this time that aid and lending agencies became extremely influential in Ghana's water distribution policy and practice. Due to these agencies prominence, "emphasis was laid on the areas in which donors wish to subsidize [...] rather than what has been determined to be strategic directions of government"<sup>142</sup>. Consequently, an unsustainable public water sector that lacks "diverse facets of water resource development" created a situation where many Ghanaians were willing to welcome private industry with open arms due to the lackluster performance of the public water sector<sup>143</sup>.

## **Debt**

In 1980s and 1990s the Global South experienced a debt crisis due to its dependence on certain commodities. Ghana's focus on cocoa and gold also placed it in this crisis when the prices suddenly dropped in the 80s which lead to increased debt. In the 1990s, Jubilee 2000, a global movement argued to cancel the debt of the Global South which triggered the creation of HIPCI and MDRI run by the IMF and World Bank respectively. "As a result of this debt cancellation, Ghana's governmental external debt fell from 6.6 billion in 2003 to 2.3 billion in

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid

<sup>142</sup> Agyenim, Joseph B., and Joyeeta Gupta. "The Evolution of Ghana's Water Law and Policy." *Review of European Community & International Environmental Law* 19, no. 3 (2010): 339–50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9388.2010.00694.x>.

<sup>143</sup> Loucks, Daniel P., et al. *Water Resource Systems Planning and Management: an Introduction to Methods, Models, and Applications*. Springer, 2017.

2006<sup>144</sup>”. This change resulted in higher school attendance and improved government policies<sup>145</sup>. Nonetheless, Ghana’s continued focus on its dependence on a few commodities made it so that there became a wider gap between rich and poor amid rapid economic growth. For instance, “for every cedi [ a form of Ghanaian currency] increase in income for the poorest 10%, the income of the richest 10% increased more than [9 Ghanaian cedis]”<sup>146</sup>.

Consequently, Ghana’s economic growth attracted foreign investors who doled out more loans and hence compounding debt<sup>147</sup>. The 2013 drop of gold’s price caused Ghana’s “economy to drop from 47.8 billion to 36 billion by 2015” because external debts are owed in dollars or other foreign currencies” Ghana’s debt payments have increased significantly<sup>148</sup>. Overall, Western imposition created a situation for Ghana to fall into debt and by the post-colonial era, the structural inequalities already firmly etched from colonial activities confirmed a continual state of dependence and increasing debt in Ghana. By specifically focusing on the history of Ghana’s first leader after independence, one can gain a better insight into the reach of past colonial events and how that feeds into postcolonial Western interactions with Ghana.

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<sup>144</sup> Jones, Tim. *The Fall and Rise of Ghana's Debt*. Oct. 2016, jubileedebt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-fall-and-rise-of-Ghanas-debt\_10.16.pdf.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

# Chapter 5: Kwame's Damage or Good Deed?

## The Construction of the Volta River Dam

*In the moment of crisis, the wise build bridges and the foolish build dams - Nigerian proverb*

With Ghana gaining independence in 1957 and rapidly turning into a republic in 1961, Ghana's first prime minister Kwame Nkrumah had a huge task at hand. He needed to devise a way to unify Ghana while also navigating the unknown waters of the first independent African nation from colonial rule. Fully aware of the Cold War tensions between America and the Soviet Union, Nkrumah did what many of his African ancestors previously did, he played against the two powers fears. Fully aware that both the Soviet Union and America used the call to modernize developing countries as a means to gain support for the communist and democratic cause respectively, Nkrumah strategically used the phenomenon of red vs. blue nations to achieve his own goals in the name of modernization theory.

It was not until Nkrumah voiced a great need to create a dam that he leaned towards American democracy to assuage President Kennedy and American company Kaiser Valco, the UK government, and the World Bank to finance his endeavor<sup>149</sup>. Nkrumah intended to use the loans from these entities to construct a dam in the Volta Basin region as well as formulate an electric smelter in Tema to turn Bauxite into aluminum fueled by the dam's electrical energy<sup>150</sup>.

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<sup>149</sup> Noer, Thomas J. "The New Frontier and African Neutralism: Kennedy, Nkrumah, and the Volta River Project." *Diplomatic History* 8, no. 1 (2007): 61–80. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.1984.tb00401.x>.

<sup>150</sup> Miescher, S.F. "Nkrumah's Baby": the Akosombo Dam and the dream of development in Ghana, 1952–1966. *Water Hist* 6, 341–366 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12685-014-0112-8>.

The plan was to provide all Ghanaians with electricity putting Ghana at the forefront of the developing world<sup>151</sup>. Nonetheless, this bright idea became muddled with economic incentives and political strings.

Through negotiations with Kaiser Valco, Valco agreed to finance the dam's construction contingent on Valco not having to pay tariffs<sup>152</sup>. During the construction, Kaiser suddenly decided to import bauxite with the underlying intention to prevent Ghana's aluminum industry from nationalizing<sup>153</sup>. This created a situation for Ghana to become fully dependent on Kaiser Valco<sup>154</sup>. Consequently, this decision terminated the new job creations that Nkrumah envisioned for the mining industry. It also deprived the Ghanaian government of significant tax money as the mining industry could not be taxed<sup>155</sup>. Thus, from previous negotiation involving Valco gaining cheap electricity from Ghana with very little taxation, Valco's exploitation of Ghana's unsteady and newly formed nation allowed them to significantly profit off of the dam<sup>156</sup>. Since the U.S. and U.K had a political reign over Ghana due to their loans, they were able to use this to attack any socialist leaning of Nkrumah<sup>157</sup>. Although the Cold War remained cold in countries such as the United States, the economic incentives and politics made it an extremely hot war in numerous newly independent countries while the poor, rural villages experienced the brunt of the heat.

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<sup>151</sup> Miescher, Stephan F. "The Akosombo Dam and the Quest for Rural Electrification in Ghana." In *Electric Worlds / Mondes électriques: Creations, Circulations, Tensions, Transitions (19th–21st C.)*, edited by Beltran Alain, Laborie Léonard, Lanthier Pierre, and Le Gallic Stéphanie, 317-42. Bruxelles; Berlin; Bern; New York; Oxford: Peter Lang AG, 2016. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv9hj6hk.17](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv9hj6hk.17).

<sup>152</sup> Franklyn A. Manu PhD (2003) *Negotiating with Foreign Investors*, *Journal of African Business*, 4:1, 5-35.

<sup>153</sup> Stephanie Decker (2011) *Corporate political activity in less developed countries: The Volta River Project in Ghana, 1958–66*, *Business History*, 53:7, 993-1017, DOI: 10.1080/00076791.2011.618223

<sup>154</sup> Franklyn A. Manu PhD (2003) *Negotiating with Foreign Investors*, *Journal of African Business*, 4:1, 5-35.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid

<sup>156</sup> Stephanie Decker (2011) *Corporate political activity in less developed countries: The Volta River Project in Ghana, 1958–66*, *Business History*, 53:7, 993-1017, DOI: 10.1080/00076791.2011.618223

<sup>157</sup> Ibid



Advertised as a wave of development and modernity, pamphlets and propaganda argued for a better life filled with electricity and bigger houses for villagers living near the dam as long as they relocate to the new sites. The construction of the dam triggered the planned evacuation of Ghanaians living near the dam who relied on the river for its local fish farms, transportation, drinking water and irrigation. The government offered two options to these villagers to either gain compensation and relocate themselves or be relocated by the government. Although a fully formed plan of identifying all villages unique cultural practices, ethnicities, agricultural techniques, family number, and dialects were intended to be taken into account during the relocation process, there was little time to fully implement the plan<sup>158</sup>.

As the dam began to flood ahead of the calculated time, the VRA, the public organization responsible for performing the organized relocation, were rushed to explain why villagers had to move and construct houses in more distant locations<sup>159</sup>. Therefore, the original plan of welcoming 80,000 villagers to new homes and villages filled with traditional Ghanaian compounds for their respective family sizes transformed into shoddy one room shacks haphazardly constructed with very little land<sup>160</sup>. For instance, as villagers used to living in areas of 100 people became one of 1,000 people with much smaller land<sup>161</sup>. Due to lack of time to accommodate certain ethnicities many ethnic clashes occurred at these locations<sup>162</sup>. Aside from the lost livelihoods and agricultural practices as the new land could not grow the previous crops

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid

<sup>159</sup> Cook, Cynthia C. (2005). *Involuntary Resettlement in Africa*. Tamakloe, Martha Ch.8 "Long Term Impacts of Resettlement: The Akosombo Dam Experience" World Bank.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid

<sup>161</sup> Ibid

<sup>162</sup> Miescher, Stephan F. "'Nkrumah's Baby': the Akosombo Dam and the Dream of Development in Ghana, 1952–1966." *Water History* 6, no. 4 (2014): 341–66. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12685-014-0112-8>.

cultivated by the villagers, many villagers became dejected and unsatisfied<sup>163</sup>. Moreover, some villagers were relocated to already populated areas where they were met with hostility from the current residents of the region<sup>164</sup>. Due to a largely illiterate village population, the speed with which they were relocated created a communication error in which many villagers still fully did not understand why they had been relocated in the first place<sup>165</sup>. Moreover, the sacred shrines that resided in Kete Krachi created a heart-breaking separation of the people from their spiritual sites<sup>166</sup>. While dams promised the continual access to water, it allowed urbanites to have electricity and reap its benefits<sup>167</sup>. Meanwhile, the rural community suffered horrendously.

First and foremost, dams created an environment of stagnant water where mosquitos accumulated around the area<sup>168</sup>. Hence, the malaria rates in the region increased fourfold<sup>169</sup>. Not only did the stagnant water welcome malaria infested insects, it also fostered an environment for parasites to fester and seep into the drinking water of the rural communities. The more distant towns by the dam were forced to uphold a new agricultural system; a system in which they could not adequately cultivate the land which lead to malnutrition such as kwashiorkor<sup>170</sup>. Hence, the once healthy and vibrant people of the Volta region became riddled with disease and malnourishment.

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<sup>163</sup> Miescher, Stephan F. "'Nkrumah's Baby': the Akosombo Dam and the Dream of Development in Ghana, 1952–1966." *Water History* 6, no. 4 (2014): 341–66. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12685-014-0112-8>.

<sup>164</sup> Cook, Cynthia C. (2005). *Involuntary Resettlement in Africa*. Tamakloe, Martha Ch.8 "Long Term Impacts of Resettlement: The Akosombo Dam Experience" World Bank.

<sup>165</sup> Miescher, Stephan F. "'Nkrumah's Baby': the Akosombo Dam and the Dream of Development in Ghana, 1952–1966." *Water History* 6, no. 4 (2014): 341–66. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12685-014-0112-8>.

<sup>166</sup> Leno, T. "Beneath a Fluid Surface: the Volta Valley, the Dente Shrine and Kete-Krachi, Ghana." University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005.

<sup>167</sup> Cook, Cynthia C. (2005). *Involuntary Resettlement in Africa*. Tamakloe, Martha Ch.8 "Long Term Impacts of Resettlement: The Akosombo Dam Experience" World Bank.

<sup>168</sup> Kibret, S., Lautze, J., McCartney, M. *et al.* Malaria impact of large dams in sub-Saharan Africa: maps, estimates and predictions. *Malar J* 14, 339 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12936-015-0873-2>

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Cook, Cynthia C. (2005). *Involuntary Resettlement in Africa*. Tamakloe, Martha Ch.8 "Long Term Impacts of Resettlement: The Akosombo Dam Experience" World Bank.

Since the dam controls the flow of water it disrupts the soil sedimentation process leading to poor crop yields<sup>171</sup>. Moreover, since the dam focused primarily on producing electricity its capacity for irrigation was never utilized which proved detrimental for the rural farmers<sup>172</sup>. Many people experienced various illness such as blindness due to increased parasitic exposure<sup>173</sup>. HIV rates in the region of the Akosombo dam increased as a 14% infection rate drastically differed from the national average<sup>174</sup>. This sudden uptick in HIV infections occurred due to rising poverty rates within the village which forced some women to venture into prostitution.<sup>175</sup> With a large male population that arrived to serve as construction workers for the dam, there was suddenly a large clientele for prostitution<sup>176</sup>. Furthermore, the unstable and disorganized relocation of Ghanaians forced many to migrate to nearby countries such as Cote d'Ivoire where they lived as a vulnerable population of whom many contracted HIV<sup>177</sup>. Many people decided to move to bigger towns such as Akosombo, but the generations of poverty and malnourishment placed them at a disadvantage from their urban counterparts in Accra<sup>178</sup>. The inequality created by the call of development began to sow its seeds. Today these communities remain disempowered and economically unstable. It seemed that politics and foreign imposition in the postcolonial world played an important role in how people's lives especially the poor would be affected.

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<sup>171</sup> Ly, Cheng K. "The Role of the Akosombo Dam on the Volta River in Causing Coastal Erosion in Central and Eastern Ghana (West Africa)." *Marine Geology* 37, no. 3-4 (1980): 323–32. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0025-3227\(80\)90108-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0025-3227(80)90108-5).

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Sauv  , Nadine, Agnes Dzokoto, Bernard Opare, Edmund Ekow Kaitoo, Nzambi Khonde, Myrto Mondor, Veronika Bekoe, and Jacques P  pin. "The Price of Development: HIV Infection in a Semiurban Community of Ghana." *JAIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* 29, no. 4 (2002): 402–8. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00042560-200204010-00012>.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Miescher, Stephan F. "'Nkrumah's Baby': the Akosombo Dam and the Dream of Development in Ghana, 1952–1966." *Water History* 6, no. 4 (2014): 341–66. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12685-014-0112-8>.

By 1966 many Ghanaians of the Volta Region were disenfranchised with the great Kwame Nkrumah. Thus, when Kwame Nkrumah travelled to Asia a coup dethroned him, and the people in the Volta Valley celebrated his ousting as perhaps “some saw some sort of spiritual intervention in the very worldly affairs of Ghana politics.”<sup>179</sup> Thus, the removal of Nkrumah triggered a hopeful era for those who suffered at the hands of Nkrumah’s rule and a fearful era for others who reaped the economic benefits.

With the abrupt termination of Nkrumah’s rule, the relocated Ghanaian were met with more disappointing news as new leadership under the NLC supported small scale agriculture<sup>180</sup>. Thus, many Ghanaians who had already transitioned too the large scale agricultural practice that the VRA had set up, now found themselves scrambling to return to small agricultural structure with crops that they had never grown before<sup>181</sup>. This constant shift in policies in accordance with shifting agendas of political parties lead to an unstable and unsteady society in many rural areas especially for those who lives had been uprooted during the Nkrumah era.<sup>182</sup> The long-term consequences of these poor, rural individuals involved the loss of their livelihoods, their culture with the destruction and flooding of Kete Krachi and the Dente shrines left them landless and more impoverished than before<sup>183</sup>. Nonetheless, advocates of development celebrated the fact that over 70% of Ghanaians gained access to electricity while employment soared in various cities.

This event parallels the events in Accra and Akosombo as a similar fate with the underserved community occurred in these areas. In all, the swift shift to modernity foreshadowed

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<sup>179</sup> Lenocho, T. “Beneath a Fluid Surface: the Volta Valley, the Dente Shrine and Kete-Krachi, Ghana.” University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005.

<sup>180</sup>

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Lenocho, T. “Beneath a Fluid Surface: the Volta Valley, the Dente Shrine and Kete-Krachi, Ghana.” University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005.

a common practice of the Ghanaian political party shifting in light of how development and global events occurred with the low-income communities suffering the most from these swift changes. The Ghanaian attitude toward how water should be viewed fluctuated with the current global and local events at the time. The one common trend in the constant fluctuation included the colonial remnants that facilitated inequity between urban and rural, poor and rich, as well as the Global South and the Global North. The combination of these aspects culminated in an unsteady process of water distribution that characterized the Ghanaian government and the foreign entities that would later enter the nation.

## CH.6: RAWLINGS AND KUFUOR- MAKING POLITICAL WAVES

*The most dangerous mistake of any political force is to forget its roots - Jerry Rawlings*

A common pattern of Ghanaian leaders who usually come from a line of African elites involve looking to foreign models in structuring their nation and political framework. Spanning from Ghana's independence "to mid-1980s, the emphasis of development practice in the country was inward-looking with an emphasis on eradicating spatial inequalities inherited from the colonial era" while also accepting some foreign entities aid in initiating development<sup>184</sup>. This took the form of building dams and other large-scale constructions in Ghana under leaders such as Nkrumah<sup>185</sup>. However, starting in the 1980s, "globalization has shifted Ghana's development practice towards an external orientation"<sup>186</sup>. In 1979, through a coup d'état against Akuffo, Rawlings along with his established Affirmed Force Revolutionary Council took over the leadership position of Ghana<sup>187</sup>. By 1981, he ruled as the dictator of Ghana and assumed the presidential role through a democratic process in 1992<sup>188</sup>.

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<sup>184</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. Accessed April 11, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Crook, Richard C. "'No-Party' Politics and Local Democracy in Africa: Rawlings' Ghana in the 1990s and the 'Ugandan Model.'" *Democratization* 6, no. 4 (1999): 114-38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510349908403635>.

<sup>188</sup> Hansen, Emmanuel, and Paul Collins. "The Army, the State, and the 'Rawlings Revolution' in Ghana." *African Affairs* 79, no. 314 (1980): 3-23. Accessed March 29, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/721629](http://www.jstor.org/stable/721629).

Rawlings was initially a socialist but upon procuring the leadership position he soon realized that Ghana was in severe debt and decided that he must access global capital<sup>189</sup>. Thus in 1983, Ghana had its first SAP program<sup>190</sup>. Rawlings adopted the World Bank and IMF's Economic Recovery Program which terminated subsidies, price controls and cut government spending<sup>191</sup>. The policy also devalued Ghanaians currency and lead to privatization of many public goods such as cocoa and sugar<sup>192</sup>. During his rule, Ghanaians access to water changed. Investment in water distribution was severely cut and skilled workers from the GWSC left the entity in waves as many migrated to other countries<sup>193</sup>. Due to the massive decline in investment as well as the loss of skilled labor, the GWSC experienced an "unprecedented decline in operational efficiency [...] leaving one-third of the system inoperable<sup>194</sup>". SAPs further deteriorated the water network in Ghana as it did not allow certain policies to emerge as a strict adherence to the IMF demands made it difficult for Ghana to enact a policy that best served its unique context. For instance, before the SAPs "the government was subsidizing about half of GWSC's operating expenditure and had placed a ceiling on the tariff level [but by] 1986 these subsidies were withdrawn and GWSC was allowed to increase tariffs by 25% annually."<sup>195</sup>

Also, the ERP forced the GWSC to only operate in urban settings while another entity known as the Community Water and Sanitation Division, CWSA, became in charge of regulating

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<sup>189</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. Accessed April 11, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> Ainuson, Kweku G. "Urban Water Politics and Water Security in Disadvantaged Urban Communities in Ghana." *African Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2010).

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> Lindsay Whitfield (2006) The politics of urban water reform in Ghana, *Review of African Political Economy*, 33:109, 425-448, DOI: 10.1080/03056240601000812

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

rural water distribution<sup>196</sup>. This split between rural and urban suggested by the World Bank paralleled the colonial era in which colonialists split water distribution entities by the same manner without regarding the original, traditional set up or the needs of the people. During this time “114 of GWSC’s 210 urban systems were transferred to CWSA”<sup>197</sup>. Under Rawling’s rule, the GWSC eventually transformed into GWLC along with the emergence of new entities in the hopes of establishing an environment that would look attractive to PSP also known as private sector participation<sup>198</sup>.

By 1998, the GWLC became regulated by the newly set up Public Utilities Regulatory Commission, PURC. PURC was in charge of setting water tariffs, and performing other regulatory measures concerning the GWLC water distribution activities.<sup>199</sup> Prior to its restructuring, the GWSC regularly fell victim to political elections where politicians, eager to keep water prices low focused on price rather than strengthening the resources for water distribution, created a poor maintained water system (Whitefield). Therefore, when the GWSC transformed to the GWLC it discovered it had very poor infrastructure to work with<sup>200</sup>. Since the GWLC was contracted to provide water services only to urban places that had a population higher than 5, 000<sup>201</sup>. This made it tricky for the poor residents who typically lived on the outskirts of the cities to access water through GWLC as the GWLC forgoes water distribution in many of these informal residential areas as they are deemed as illegal living areas or report

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<sup>196</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. Accessed April 11, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Lindsay Whitfield (2006) The politics of urban water reform in Ghana, *Review of African Political Economy*, 33:109, 425-448, DOI: 10.1080/03056240601000812

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ainuson, Kweku G. "Urban Water Politics and Water Security in Disadvantaged Urban Communities in Ghana." *African Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2010).

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.



inability to set up water pipes in places that are unsuitable for piped water systems. As Ainuson states:

There are areas or communities within these urban centers which exist almost as autonomous communities but are regarded as part of the larger city because of their location within the city limits. Thus, though these communities would have been regarded as rural because of the size of their populations, there are regarded as urban because of their geographic location. These communities tend to be at the urban fringes, exhibit shanty town characteristics, and have a high concentration of poor people. The communities are characterized by low income dwellers, squatters, inadequate infrastructure, and low levels of education. A sizeable proportion of these residents are rural-urban migrants in search of work in the cities. GWCL, which caters to the needs of the more traditional urban centers, therefore severely disadvantage these poor urban dwellers in water service provision. Although there is an acute water supply shortage in such areas, their plight is often hidden within the aggregate data obtained for the entire urban areas.<sup>202</sup>

Moreover, due to these areas' designation as urban they are not eligible to be managed by the CWSA which specializes in managing water distribution in rural areas<sup>203</sup>. Rural areas normally do not have the proper conditions for piped water systems, so the CWSA "facilitates the construction of boreholes and hand dug wells" offering a viable form of water access that is economical for rural residents<sup>204</sup>. Consequently, the urban poor turn to small-scale, usually unregulated, water suppliers and end up paying "three of four times what residents on the GWLC network pay for water"<sup>205</sup>. Consequently, the GWLC was only able to "meet the water demands of only 59 percent of urban residents" factoring all urban locations in Ghana<sup>206</sup>. Specifically, in Accra, the underserved community pays "ten times more for their water than residents in high income area"<sup>207</sup>. Overall, the way in which the GWSC was restructured provided the perfect environment for cherry-picking as poorer districts that were previously designated as urban were either categorized as rural or deemed as an impossible urban area to distribute water<sup>208</sup>. This

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<sup>202</sup> Ainuson, Kweku G. "Urban Water Politics and Water Security in Disadvantaged Urban Communities in Ghana." *African Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2010).

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. Accessed April 11, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).

practice reflected colonialism as only profitable areas in Ghana sparked colonialists' attention and activities<sup>209</sup>.

In 2001, Kufuor took over the presidency under the new political party that he had founded in 1992 called the NPP<sup>210</sup>. Through a peaceful democratic process, Rawling's handed over the presidential role to Kufuor signaling the end of military rule and the re-emergence of civilian rule or at least the semblance of one<sup>211</sup>. Kufuor who has had experience working in the private sector as a businessman and regularly espoused a democratic sentiment, the new president made Ghana very appealing to PSP<sup>212</sup>. It was during this time that the Ghanaian government began to broker deals with foreign private companies regarding water distribution<sup>213</sup>. Nonetheless, the hope that Kufuor's government would encourage civilian discourse and consider civilian concerns regarding water access soon disappeared as local Ghanaian found themselves left out of the political discourses of how water should be distributed in Ghana<sup>214</sup>. Instead of hearing the unique stances of the local communities, Ghanaian elites such as Kufuor turned to the foreign committee yet again. As Yeboah referencing academic scholar Escobar's argument states:

[...] development professionals and institutions devise mechanisms that make societies fit models of the modern world rather than their specific history and geography. This reflects a colonial mindset, or psyche of elite and its attendant Eurocentrism, informing development practice, especially in this era of globalization<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. Accessed April 11, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).

<sup>210</sup> Agyeman-Duah, Ivor. *Between Faith and History: a Biography of J.A. Kufuor*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World, 2004.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. Accessed April 11, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).

<sup>214</sup> Lindsay Whitfield (2006) The politics of urban water reform in Ghana, *Review of African Political Economy*, 33:109, 425-448, DOI: 10.1080/03056240601000812

<sup>215</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. Accessed April 11, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).

Both the Rawlings and Kufuor administration showed their preference for foreign aid and advice in multiple cases. For instance, the Ghanaian government invited two consulting firms funded by the World Bank to produce a report on the Ghanaian water distribution known as the Halcrow and Berger Report that were American and British respectively<sup>216</sup>. Due to the World Bank's preference of PSP, the reports were slightly biased as both argued for PSP in Ghana's water sector even though they acknowledged that the underserved communities would be better off under publicly controlled water distribution<sup>217</sup>.

Another example of the Ghanaian government preference of foreign intellect over that of locals involves consultancy groups that were hired to determine Ghanaians' attitudes towards water privatization<sup>218</sup>. Even though a local Ghanaian group by the name of United News Service/Colan Consult had already conducted its own opinion research that found community confusion and fear about water privatization, their findings were largely dismissed<sup>219</sup>. The Ghanaian government preferred to act on the findings of the UK Adam Smith Institute which produced identical results and even centered the majority of its report on the United News Service/Colan Consult's findings<sup>220</sup>. Lastly, when the Ghanaian government started to accept bids for the water sector, they made it impossible for upper-class Ghanaians or Ghanaian companies to participate in the bidding process while also allowing for the emergence of monopolies. As Yeboah states:

It seems that decision makers in Ghana had bought into the idea of global capital, and, in the process, they sacrificed sovereignty by offering Ghana's water to global capitalists by establishing strategic alliances to extract the optimal profit possible. Development for Ghana had now been constructed as western. Second, by making these two units so large, any potential local capitalist (or African, for that matter) was ruled out in preference to foreign capital. Thus,

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

there was the guarantee that only global capital, which had supported Ghana and its GWSC through SAP, loans and grants, would be able to pick the cherries. Unit A consisted of 26 urban water systems that were valued at between US\$375 and 512 million, and Unit B consisted of 70 urban systems valued at between US\$305 and 561 million. At these prices, no Ghanaian, or for that matter African, company could bid for these units.<sup>221</sup>

The “Eurocentrism surrounding Ghana’s water privatization does not originate with Western technocrats but with Ghanaian elite decision-makers” as these individuals in power always turned to foreign advice, foreign aid, and foreign leadership with regard to water privatization<sup>222</sup>. From Rawling’s continual dependence on global capital to Kufuor’s complete reliance on foreign aid and advisement, Ghanaians were soon realizing that their voices and concerns were not being heard. Nevertheless, a resistance movement determined to have at least some of their demands heard began brewing during the Kufuor administration.

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

# Chapter 7: The Resistance: National Coalition Against Water Privatization

*Rain wets a leopard's skin, but it does not wash out the spots – Ghanaian proverb*

In South Africa, water privatization signaled an immense conflict due to an important statement in the South African constitution. The constitution states “everyone has a right to have access to [...] sufficient food and water<sup>223</sup>” Consequently, when the government began to privatize water, this decision excluded many poor, black South Africans from accessing potable water, as many black South Africans who were forced to drink contaminated water that eventually led to a massive cholera outbreaks in multiple townships such as Ngwelezane.<sup>224</sup> The outbreak resulted in over 300 deaths and 150,000 cases of cholera<sup>225</sup>. Advocates against water privatization were able to take legal action by arguing that the companies directly infringed on a constitutional promise and used the constitutional frameworks as a basis for their ammunition.

Unlike the South African constitution, the Ghanaian constitution does not mention any connection between water as a human right or a commodity<sup>226</sup>. Consequently, the drive to combat privatization proved difficult in terms of legality as resistance movements could not rely on constitutional infringements. Despite this setback, local communities within Ghana have a history of strong and successful resistance.

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<sup>223</sup> Fort, Meredith P., et al. *Sickness and Wealth: the Corporate Assault on Global Health*. Bond, Patrick “The Political Roots of South Africa’s Epidemic” South End Press, 2004.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid

<sup>226</sup> Agyenim, Joseph B., and Joyeeta Gupta. “The Evolution of Ghana’s Water Law and Policy.” *Review of European Community & International Environmental Law* 19, no. 3 (2010): 339–50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9388.2010.00694.x>.

As Ghana tried to shift control from public to private ownership in the neoliberal area, a new form of resistance emerged. In 2000, Ghana bid a 20-year contract with Azurix an American subsidiary of the company Enron<sup>227</sup>. Under the new Water Sector Participation, the Ghanaian government intended a complete privatization of water but soon protests broke out as news of Azurix bribing the government with five million dollars in order to win the contract spread out to such an extent that the agreement became null as the World Bank took away its loan backing the contract<sup>228</sup>.

The National Coalition Against Water Privatization formed during this time and played an important role in ousting Azurix by bringing the bribery scandal to light as well as informing others about the disadvantages of water privatization<sup>229</sup>. The National Coalition Against Water Privatization (NCAP) founded by a Ghanaian public interest lawyer<sup>230</sup> named Rudolf Amenga-Etego and included student unions, labor movements, low-income individuals, a non-profit called the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC) and other people against SAPs.<sup>231</sup> Most civil unrest stirred due to the concern that private companies will perform cherry picking by favoring customers who could pay for water access<sup>232</sup>. The NCAP mainly emerged due to outrage with the constant secrecy of the Ghanaian government regarding water distribution. The civil society was also fearful of increased water tariffs, a common practice that occurred in other countries of the Global South that privatized their water system. Nonetheless, the Ghanaian

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<sup>227</sup> Ainuson, Kwaku G. "Urban Water Politics and Water Security in Disadvantaged Urban Communities in Ghana." *African Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2010).

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. Accessed April 11, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Lindsay Whitfield (2006) The politics of urban water reform in Ghana, *Review of African Political Economy*, 33:109, 425-448, DOI: 10.1080/03056240601000812

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

government created a five-year contract with South Africa and the Netherlands's Vitens Rand Water Services in 2006 with its Ghanaian subsidiary Aqua vitRa Limited<sup>233</sup>. The two companies merged in Ghana and became known as Aqua Vitens Rand Limited<sup>234</sup>. Many of the people who were against privatization include poor urban citizens who saw water as a public good and a human right<sup>235</sup>. Their argument stemmed from the belief that little thought was produced to help the poor during discussions and the action to privatize water. As Whitfield states:

The only public evidence of the government's efforts to consider the urban poor – besides its public statements discussed below – was in Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2002-2004 version), which mentioned the establishment of a unit to monitor the provision of water to the urban poor.<sup>236</sup>

The NCAP also allude to a spiritual argument as they associate water as sacred that should not be sold for profit at the demise of others<sup>237</sup>. They assert that the only reason behind poor governmental distribution is an inadequate water distribution system that has not been financially prioritized<sup>238</sup>. The Coalition criticized the Rawling's administration for not thoroughly researching whether the public sector could serve as a good source for water distribution as the Rawling's government support for control of the private sector formed a biased approach to water distribution in favor of the private-sector.<sup>239</sup> The World Bank was a strong proponent of the PSP. As the World Bank stated in 2001 concerning Ghana's privatization:

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<sup>233</sup> Ainuson, Kweku G. "Urban Water Politics and Water Security in Disadvantaged Urban Communities in Ghana." *African Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2010).

<sup>234</sup> Ibid

<sup>235</sup> Lindsay Whitfield (2006) The politics of urban water reform in Ghana, *Review of African Political Economy*, 33:109, 425-448, DOI: 10.1080/03056240601000812

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Etego, Rudolf and Grusky, Sara "The New Face of Conditionality: The World Bank and Water Privatization of Ghana." *The Age of Commodity: Water Privatization in Southern Africa*, by David McDonald and Greg Ruiters, Routledge, 2012, pp. 275-291.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

Water is a commodity because it is produced through an industrial process. The role of the state is not to supply water, but to ensure that safe water is supplied at a cost the poor can afford the private sector is the bearer of efficiency and that the only way to improve the efficiency of the Ghana water utility is through increasing private sector involvement<sup>240</sup>

Despite the lack of transparency that characterized the Ghanaian government, the NCAP did experience some victories as it prevented the water sector from completely privatizing, as the Ghanaian government had intended for complete privatization by May 2002<sup>241</sup>. By 2003 the Ghanaian government had assumed full control of the water distribution system. However, in 2007 the government codified the National Water Policy which stated that water is an economic good<sup>242</sup>. This new law further highlights the Ghanaian government's tendency to completely ignore any grievances of the people and rather upholds the model of the West. Yeboah states that "the irony of all this is that even though neoliberalism, with its free market principles, was the guiding force for making Ghana's water delivery efficient, the market that was imagined under Ghana's private sector participation was not free"<sup>243</sup>. In all, the post-colonial era still fell victim to the national internalization of colonialism to such an extent that Ghanaian political officials would only accept foreign direction that at times directly reflected the locals' previous insights or notions as fact. The failure to acknowledge Ghanaian ingenuity and foresight feeds into the cycle of significant missteps in water policy.

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<sup>241</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. Accessed April 11, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).

<sup>242</sup> Agyenim, Joseph B., and Joyeeta Gupta. "The Evolution of Ghana's Water Law and Policy." *Review of European Community & International Environmental Law* 19, no. 3 (2010): 339-50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9388.2010.00694.x>.

<sup>243</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. Accessed April 11, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).



# Ch 8. Privatization Effects: Pipes, Sachets, and Bottled Water

*It is the fool whose own tomatoes are sold to him-* Ghanaian proverb

## Water Privatization in Ghana: Piped Water and the Water Bottle Industry

The global call for water privatization began “when Margaret Thatcher sold off all water utilities in England and Wales [... meanwhile] private water companies, which were formerly restricted to areas of Europe and North America saw a brilliant opportunity” to commoditize water in developing countries.<sup>244</sup> The lack of regulation in many countries of the Global South made companies strategically target profitable parts of countries to set up water companies with the assurance that the companies could leave at any time due to the lax laws.<sup>245</sup> Moreover, “the borrowing bonanza of the 1970s, when western capital was desperately seeking outlets in the Third World to recycle over accumulated capital (petro-dollars, in particular)” eventually placed countries of the Global South in significant debt by the 1980s<sup>246</sup>. With such countries in dire need of bailout, many countries started to accept structural adjustment programs allowing for PSP to take form in these nations. Hence the Global South was once again controlled by the Global North as multinational water companies flooded developing nations under the false

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<sup>244</sup> Spronk, Susan. "The Politics of Water Privatization in the Third World." *Review of Radical Political Economics* 39, no. 1 (2007): 126-31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0486613406296937>.

<sup>245</sup> SWYNGEDOUW, ERIK, MARIA KAÏKA, and ESTEBAN CASTRO. "Urban Water: A Political-Ecology Perspective." *Built Environment (1978-)* 28, no. 2 (2002): 124-37. Accessed April 12, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/23288796](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23288796).

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

pretense that they will provide these countries suffering from massive debt and consequently a poor governmental water framework with an efficient and equitable form of water distribution.<sup>247</sup>

To understand this surge of water bottle consumption, one must look to the history of the water bottle industry in America and how the popularity of water bottles flooded African nations starting in America. In the U.S., many Americans largely obtained their water through tap water due to the discovery of chlorinating water in 1908.<sup>248</sup> Nonetheless, Perrier a French water company, wanted to tap into the American market and advertised spring water as being beneficial to one's health.<sup>249</sup> The ad campaign was so effective that Perrier transformed from a company selling 3 million bottles of water in 1976 to selling 200 million in 1979.<sup>250</sup> Nestlé later bought Perrier and currently controls “nearly a third of the U.S. bottled water market” dominating the 35 billion dollar industry in America.<sup>251</sup> Nestlé fully aware of the lack of spring water in America to meet consumer demand “lobbied the FDA in 1996 to codify a very helpful definition of spring water” that allowed water companies to “sell bottled water as spring water without getting it from any actual spring” the law was written in such a way to permit drilling of groundwater that is somehow connected to a spring water source, no matter how far away the spring water may be from the actual drill.<sup>252</sup>

This mindset of selling purified bottled water took a huge leap in the developing world as the “majority of bottled water sales now happen in the developing world” due to citizens’ dissatisfaction with poor governmental water distribution and obstacles to obtain clean water.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Nasser, Latif, director. *Rotten. Rotten*, Zero Point Zero, 4 Oct. 2019.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid

<sup>250</sup> Ibid

<sup>251</sup> Ibid

<sup>252</sup> Ibid

<sup>253</sup> Ibid

Companies such as Coca Cola's Dasani and Pepsi's Aquafina who sell these bottles as an alternative to spring water in America have now infiltrated developing countries.<sup>254</sup> Nestlé sells its version of non-spring purified bottled water called Pure-Life for the developing market claiming 10% of the global market.<sup>255</sup> Yet the poor communities cannot afford bottled water. Thus, only the middle and upper-class benefit from bottled water.<sup>256</sup> The poor are therefore forced to rely on the less sanitary untested boreholes which are still costly or sachets, the most unsanitary yet cheapest alternative.<sup>257</sup>

### **Sachet Water: a hopeful alternative?**

Sachet water became an important component to many African countries' societies as it offered a new alternative to water access. It was frequently marketed as a safer alternative to river water and borehole water and largely appealed to underserved communities who did not have the financial capacity to purchase bottled water but could purchase the much cheaper form of sachet water. Although sachet water filled a gap in the water distribution system and increased access to water, studies revealed that sachet water may not be the safe option that it was marketed to be. Issues of contaminants such as microorganisms emerged in the academic debates surrounding sachet water. Concerns over fraudulent products also gradually popped up in these academic discussions. Therefore, the once formidable sachet water was met with concern as governmental regulators began to look into the issues and some consumers showed growing concern. In all, sachet water undoubtedly aided in facilitating water access across various African countries; however, the fluctuations in water sachet quality, fluctuating governmental regulations, and lack of studies concerning sachet water and its link to health fostered a huge

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid

<sup>256</sup> Ibid

<sup>257</sup> Ibid

discrepancy between local areas making it difficult to discern whether sachet water serves as a safe alternative or not.

With the emergence of sachet water, low income communities welcomed the cheaper alternative with open arms. However, the bright light of sachet water soon dimmed with academic studies finding high counts of parasites, E. Coli, and other contaminants. Compared to many African countries, Ghana has a more stringent regulation over its sachet water industry as both the FDA and GSA provide rigid guidelines that sachet water must follow. Nevertheless, studies vary in Ghana's sachet water quality. As studies conducted in the rural villages of Hohoe found significant counts of bacteria in the water while a study conducted in Accra discovered that all sachet water tested met the appropriate standards for the GSA<sup>258</sup>. The stark differences in these studies account for many reasons. First and foremost, the Ghanaian government allots only 1% of its revenue dedicated to water, this makes it very hard to enforce stringent guidelines for the companies to follow. Moreover, Ghana experiences high cases of fraudulent sachet water sold in the market leading to highly contaminated sachet water that pose as a reputable companies' sachet water. Lastly, there are various mechanisms in which sachet water is sourced from. For instance, sachet water may be packaged by a machine or by hand<sup>259</sup>. Furthermore, sachet water may contain tap water, borehole water, filtered water, and in some cases river water, which all contribute to the water quality of sachet water<sup>260</sup>.

Aside from the alarming rate in which microorganisms are found in sachet water, toxic chemicals can also dwell in the drinking source. Although studies are sparse concerning BPA

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<sup>258</sup> Agboli, Eric, et al. "Assessment of Some Physico-Chemical Properties and Bacteriological Status of Sachet Water Consumed in the Hohoe Municipality, Ghana." *International Journal of TROPICAL DISEASE & Health*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2018, pp. 1–8., doi:10.9734/ijtdh/2017/37744.

<sup>259</sup> Dada, E.o., et al. "Concentrations of Phthalates and Metals in Commercially Packaged Sachet and Plastic Bottled Water Sold in Lagos, Nigeria." *Journal of Food Quality and Hazards Control*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2018, pp. 134–139., doi:10.29252/jfqhc.5.4.4.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

and sachet water, some studies show that high levels of BPA can be detected in sachet water<sup>261</sup>. Bisphenol A, BPA is a known carcinogen and endocrine disruptor that can lead to various ailments such as infertility and breast cancer<sup>262</sup>. BPA act as an environmental contaminant that mimics estrogen and hence can trigger cell replication<sup>263</sup>. Due to lack of research concerning BPA and sachets in Ghana, I will focus on case studies in Nigeria to extrapolate information about Ghana. A study conducted in Benin City, Nigeria compared the BPA count of three different sachet water brands and one plastic bottled water brand after 1 week of storage at room temperature to those after 4 weeks at room temperature<sup>264</sup>. The study found that sachet water after 1 and 4 weeks had higher amounts of Bisphenol A than that of plastic bottled water<sup>265</sup>. Significant counts of toxic phthalates such as vinyl chloride and methylene chloride were also detected in the water<sup>266</sup>.

BPA and these other toxic chemicals have been linked to cancer, infertility, early puberty, and severe hormone imbalances among other debilitating or deadly diseases<sup>267</sup>. In a country where access to health care is already sparse, this increased exposure to vulnerable populations may serve as a reason behind the poor health of low income families in Ghana. Another concerning aspect of BPA involves its ability to be passed on to future generations.

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<sup>261</sup> Atuanya, E, et al. "Bioavailability of Plastic Contaminants and Their Effects on Plastic Bottled and Sachet Drinking Water Supplies." *British Microbiology Research Journal*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2016, pp. 1–10., doi:10.9734/bmrj/2016/25265.

<sup>262</sup> Bae, B., et al. "The Quantification and Characterization of Endocrine Disruptor Bisphenol-A Leaching from Epoxy Resin." *Water Science and Technology*, vol. 46, no. 11-12, 2002, pp. 381–387., doi:10.2166/wst.2002.0766.

<sup>263</sup> Rubin, Beverly S. "Bisphenol A: An Endocrine Disruptor with Widespread Exposure and Multiple Effects." *The Journal of Steroid Biochemistry and Molecular Biology*, vol. 127, no. 1-2, 2011, pp. 27–34., doi:10.1016/j.jsbmb.2011.05.002.

<sup>264</sup> Atuanya, E, et al. "Bioavailability of Plastic Contaminants and Their Effects on Plastic Bottled and Sachet Drinking Water Supplies." *British Microbiology Research Journal*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2016, pp. 1–10., doi:10.9734/bmrj/2016/25265.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid

<sup>267</sup> Rubin, Beverly S. "Bisphenol A: An Endocrine Disruptor with Widespread Exposure and Multiple Effects." *The Journal of Steroid Biochemistry and Molecular Biology*, vol. 127, no. 1-2, 2011, pp. 27–34., doi:10.1016/j.jsbmb.2011.05.002.

Scientific studies show that BPA can be transgenerational indicating that individuals infected with BPA can pass down the BPA and its horrendous side effects to their children and future generations<sup>268</sup>. In countries where healthcare access is sparse and the majority of the population lives in poverty and is highly susceptible to contracting illnesses, BPA should be of more concern as the cheap material of sachet water not only consist of BPA but also dangerous phthalates. Another concerning issue involves the fact that West African countries experience incredibly high temperatures on a daily basis. For instance, the average annual temperature of Ghana is 80 degrees Fahrenheit. As sachet water is typically stored and sold on the street, the plastic is subject to leaching<sup>269</sup>. As higher temperatures have a directly proportional relationship with leaching, the prolonged period of time in which sachet water is exposed to heat makes it highly probable that sachet water is leaching BPA, phthalates, and other toxins at extremely high rates<sup>270</sup>.

Access to water serves as an integral link to economic success, political stability, and social well-being. Analyzing the historic implications of water access proves beneficial in understanding the current state of Ghana water distribution and access. Sachet water evolved as a solution to the absolute lack of options that underserved communities had with regards to water access. Many of these individuals from low-income backgrounds are in this current state of poverty due to colonial and neoliberal influences<sup>271</sup>. With a strong regulation system as well as

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<sup>268</sup> Bansal, A., et al. "Transgenerational Effects of Maternal Bisphenol: a Exposure on Offspring Metabolic Health." *Journal of Developmental Origins of Health and Disease*, vol. 10, no. 02, 2018, pp. 164–175., doi:10.1017/s2040174418000764.

<sup>269</sup> Bae, B., et al. "The Quantification and Characterization of Endocrine Disruptor Bisphenol-A Leaching from Epoxy Resin." *Water Science and Technology*, vol. 46, no. 11-12, 2002, pp. 381–387., doi:10.2166/wst.2002.0766.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid

<sup>271</sup> Guzmán, Danice, and Justin Stoler. "An Evolving Choice in a Diverse Water Market: A Quality Comparison of Sachet Water with Community and Household Water Sources in Ghana." *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, vol. 99, no. 2, 2018, pp. 526–533., doi:10.4269/ajtmh.17-0804.

better containers that do not contain BPA, phthalates and other toxic chemicals as well as ingredients that can be recycled, sachet water can become a promising alternative that is safe and equitable. Nonetheless, the ideal sachet water industry can only reach fruition if researchers, locals, and governments sound the alarm calling attention to the current issue to promote innovative change benefiting all aspects of the nations.

Due to the expensive nature of sanitary water, many parents tend to take their children out of school so the children can work and provide more income to promote the family's purchasing of water. Moreover, ailments due to drinking contaminated water leads to a weakened workforce and spikes in unemployment while the cost of healthcare increases. Lastly, HIV is normally of huge concern in Ghana, but HIV is prevalent in cycles of poverty where people are placed in vulnerable positions where they cannot dictate their sexual protection<sup>272</sup>.

In all, water access serves as a domino effect in many of the issues that Ghana faces today. Water's expense reinforces the cycle of poverty as individuals must clamor to make ends meet to even attain a somewhat clean water alternative in the form of sachet water or risk the contraction of severe illness from accessing contaminated rivers. Perhaps if more research and resources went into analyzing and examining water access and water quality, Ghana would experience new insights and develop innovative practices regarding how to better support their societies.

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<sup>272</sup> Sauv , Nadine, Agnes Dzokoto, Bernard Opare, Edmund Ekow Kaitoo, Nzambi Khonde, Myrto Mondor, Veronika Bekoe, and Jacques P pin. "The Price of Development: HIV Infection in a Semiurban Community of Ghana." *JAIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* 29, no. 4 (2002): 402–8. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00042560-200204010-00012>.

# Conclusion

*If two selfish young men sit next to a pot of water, the water spills out on the ground*-Ghanaian proverb

Feminist political ecology and postcolonial geography fills the gap in academic debates concerning water privatization. The ability to tie the local with the global is integral in deciphering the unique context of an individual nation and its interaction with its people and resources. Specifically focusing on water, this paper exhibited how water became a tool for power that aided in the destruction of traditional water systems, community, and health. The unequal water distribution resulted in the creation of a disempowered group consisting of low-income individuals with women as one of the most vulnerable subgroups. On the other hand, it further empowered African elites who continued to turn to a Eurocentric framework to model water distribution as both the upper and middle class in Accra as well as the upper class in Akosombo appreciated the new system. Although low-income Ghanaian locals did protest and demanded a more just water system, they still suffer from poor water access due to structural inequity tied to the colonial era.

In order to figure out the most suitable way to distribute water equitably and equally, we must de-masculinize the current Western institutions, models, and research. We must first attempt to understand how the vestiges of colonialism resurfaces in everyday life. As seen with the SAPs, we are seeing the negative side effects of exterior organizations in foreign countries. Developing countries need to be placed at the forefront of decision making as feminism calls for greater diversity in global leadership roles. This involves having greater access to leadership roles in the IMF and World Bank, which suggests a new construction of how these entities are



structured. Furthermore, some form of debt forgiveness must be implemented as time and time again much of the debt accumulated by developing countries is due to structural inequality.

A feminist by the name of Alison Mountz posits that as long as these macroeconomic policies that exclusively benefit the masculine developed world persist, we will continue to see only people of a certain class, gender, race, and ethnicity reap the rewards of capitalism at the expense of the marginalized community.<sup>273</sup> Recognizing the historical implications of the current state of a country and the current state of local communities will lead to a more nuanced approach in determining the best course of actions that is highly individualized. Ghanaian culture and history is unique from British or American history; therefore, copying a practice that developed out of the West is not beneficial and in some cases can be damaging to certain countries. As feminist scholar Yaffa Trulove states “a limited set of global actors and interests dominate international water doctrine and policy, and are congruently able to wield a powerful influence on” low-income countries of the Global South.<sup>274</sup> Thus, change must emerge organically and voluntarily within the country or at least accept aid from institutions that truly support a culture of diverse thought and people.

Although studies comparing various countries at a time are beneficial in seeing the big picture, case studies should not be cast aside as less important in research. Case studies help highlight important and unique factors that many wide spread studies may miss or overlook. Feminists use the concept of case studies to tell an emotional story that highlights important problems that other studies may completely miss or mark as trivial. With regard to water distribution in Ghana, there is a clear historical link to certain Ghanaian’s attitudes and

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<sup>273</sup> Mountz, A. and J. Hyndman. (2006) *Feminist Approaches to the Global Intimate*, *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 34(1-2): 446-463

<sup>274</sup> Trulove, Yaffa. “(Re-)Conceptualizing Water Inequality in Delhi, India through a Feminist Political Ecology Framework.” *Geoforum* 42, no. 2 (2011): 143–52. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.01.004>.

interactions with water that will be difficult to discern in a larger study. Yeboah states that “colonial power is not possessed solely by the colonizer but also by certain segments of the colonized. This power can be used in either resistance, or in further subjugation of the bulk of the colonized by their elite.”<sup>275</sup> Therefore, there lies a great need within this discourse to focus specifically on local communities within a particular African country to better explore these complex power dynamics and invent ways from those findings to improve a nation’s social and economic well-being.

Lastly, research done by Africanists working on feminist political ecology needs more recognition as such research satisfies the overall goal of feminist political ecology, which entails hearing the local voices of the particular country being studied<sup>276</sup>. Upon my research, there are very few Africanist scholars covering feminist political ecology and even fewer concerning Ghana. This phenomenon occurs due to structural and systemic inequity that make it very difficult for female Ghanaians to get a degree and later successfully enter the research sphere. African feminist political ecology serves as “an important branch of and often even a corrective to second-wave feminism and post-colonial studies” which aids in recognizing “the social contexts among women” in Africa.<sup>277</sup> It also “unveils their underlying social structures from the colonial period” to the present regarding present-day African countries that underwent colonialism.<sup>278</sup>

As a famous Ghanaian proverb states “the ruin of a nation begins in the home of its people,” privatization of Ghana led to considerable hardship in various households to such an

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<sup>275</sup> Ian Yeboah. "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice: Urban Water Privatization in Ghana." *The Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1 (2006): 50-65. [www.jstor.org/stable/4134873](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134873).

<sup>276</sup> Zerai, Assata, and Brenda N. Sanya. *Safe Water, Sanitation, and Early Childhood Malnutrition in East Africa an African Feminist Analysis of the Lives of Women in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

extent that the Ghanaian government eventually regained control over water distribution. Nonetheless, due to past events and current inequality, many Ghanaians are still facing hardship as the vestiges of colonialism, imperialism and institutions created by the Bretton Woods conference still linger in many aspects of Ghanaian politics, society, and economy. By focusing on local needs, the Ghanaian government and the people can solve these issues.

# Biography

Caroline Ankoma-Sey was born in Houston, TX. She enrolled in the Plan II Honors program at the University of Texas at Austin in 2016. During her second year, she pursued a second major in International Relations and Global Studies. She plans to pursue a job in healthcare.

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